

# Repairing and reconnecting storm damaged private overhead electricity lines (POELs) – June 2021

## Fact sheet

### Private electric lines

There are two types of private lines:

- Overhead powerlines (bare and insulated); and
- Underground powerlines.

Where the private electric lines are overhead they are called private overhead electric lines or POELs.

POELs are poles and wires located on private properties that connect the property to the electricity distribution network.

POELs start at the point of supply. This is where the electricity distribution network connects to the first pole on your property. The POEL on your property may look identical to that of the electrical distribution network.

There are many different arrangements for where your line begins. If you are not sure about the arrangement on your property, or whether you have a POEL, contact your electricity distribution company. AusNet Services has a helpful brochure on its website; ***Private electric lines, your responsibilities***. You can find it in the resources section at:

[www.ausnetservices.com.au/Safety/Vegetation-and-Powerline-Clearance](http://www.ausnetservices.com.au/Safety/Vegetation-and-Powerline-Clearance)

You are responsible for the maintenance and repair of the private electric lines on your property, just the same as you are for the wiring within your home.

A private electric line is described in the Electricity Safety Act 1998. The legislation defines the 'point of supply' and confirms your responsibility for maintenance of your private electric line.

### Repairing and reconnecting POELs

As a result of the recent storm, some property owners in storm affected communities require the repair and reconnection of POELs that supply electricity to their properties.

- The electricity distribution company will only reconnect power to your POEL once it has been repaired, and a Certificate of Electrical Safety (COES) will be issued by the registered electrical contractor (REC).
- Don't be tempted to do your own electrical work – it's illegal and can also be deadly. All work to repair and reconnect POELs must be undertaken by a registered electrical contractor. The REC will send a licensed and qualified electrician to do the work to the required standards.
- If you are unsure how to find your local REC search for a registered electrical contractor online. Go to our website to find out what to look for: [www.esv.vic.gov.au/safety-education/choosing-and-using-a-tradesperson/electricity-tradespeople](http://www.esv.vic.gov.au/safety-education/choosing-and-using-a-tradesperson/electricity-tradespeople)

We understand that you will want to reconnect power to your property as soon as possible, the following steps explain the process.

## Step 1

Property occupier contacts a REC to send out a licensed and qualified electrician to conduct an inspection.

## Step 2

Electrician makes a site assessment and provides the occupier with an '**undertaking document**' for signature.

## Step 3

Electrician contacts ESV to:

- Outline the technical repair and reconnection requirements of the POEL
- Provide a copy of the **POEL undertaking document signed by the occupier**
- Receive a restoration code.

## Step 4

Electrician carries out the repairs.

## Step 5

Electrician contacts the electricity distribution company providing it with the restoration code and Certificate of Electrical Safety (COES). The distribution company then attends the site and makes the reconnection.

## Undertaking

There are some rules around the emergency restoration of a private overhead line in a high bushfire risk area that require you to make a formal undertaking.

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission found that powerlines caused about half of the catastrophic bushfires that resulted in loss of life.

Victorian legislation was amended to reflect that if a POEL in Hazardous Bushfire Risk Areas (as designated by the Country Fire Authority) needs to be substantially reconstructed you are obliged to place it underground, at your cost.

Placing your supply underground now may introduce further delays in getting your power supply restored. In this situation the Electricity Safety (General) Regulations 2019 allow the existing supply to be temporarily restored providing you undertake to underground it later.

The regulations say the POEL must be placed underground, or disconnected from electricity supply, within sixty days of the date of your undertaking.

ESV understands in these extenuating circumstances the sixty-day timeframe to put your supply underground may not be practical and we will work with you rather than apply a hard and fast rule. Even with some flexibility from us, the legislation does require that the line be placed underground.

## For more information

Contact us on these numbers and say your query related to Private Overhead Electric Lines.

Call:

- 03 9203 9700 (business hours)
- 1800 800 158 (after hours).