

Media statement

2.30pm, Monday 14 July 2014

Power fault cause narrowed down

The power fault that resulted in the loss of power to north Christchurch customers on Wednesday night last week has been narrowed down to likely windblown debris hitting key equipment in Orion's Papanui substation. The outage, which started at around 9.30pm, initially affected approximately 30,000 customers. 18,000 customers remained without power for three and a half hours.

Orion CEO Rob Jamieson says "since Wednesday evening we've undertaken extensive multiple investigations to try to determine the cause of the network failure. Specialist teams have meticulously examined 18km of high voltage lines running between Papanui to Islington, and other in-house experts have thoroughly inspected our Papanui and Islington substations. No damage has been found. By eliminating line and substation problems, we have been able to conclude that the fault was most likely caused by a small piece of material being blown into specialised equipment. The lines are now back in operation."

"Debris falling at a particular spot on our high voltage equipment, meant that power supply was lost to not one, but both of our lines to the area. As the object would have exploded on impact, meaning no trace of it remained after the event, we have had to methodically work through a process of elimination prior to being able to conclude this was the cause of the failure."

"While definitely a regrettable incident and we apologise for the inconvenience it may have caused some of our customers, we are happy that our emergency procedures worked well on the night and we were able to restore power within 3 and a half hours in wet, dark and windy conditions. The incident will also hopefully serve as a reminder for people to always be prepared for an electricity outage or emergency event."

ENDS

About Orion

Orion New Zealand Limited:

- owns and operates the electricity distribution network in central Canterbury between the Waimakariri and Rakaia rivers
- distributes electricity to more than 190,000 homes and businesses
- bills electricity retailers for the network delivery service and electricity retailers then on-charge homes and businesses.
- is owned by the Christchurch City Council (89.3%) and the Selwyn District Council (10.7%).