

**Media statement – for immediate release
4.00pm, Wednesday 11 September 2013**

Progress to restore power

Power remains out to 15,000 Orion customers this afternoon after strong winds affected power lines across Orion's electricity distribution network overnight. Most power cuts are due to trees or branches falling onto power lines.

The areas still affected are predominantly in the rural region west of Christchurch with power restored to most of urban Christchurch. Half of Orion's major rural substations remain without power and teams continue to assess the extent of the damage.

"Last night 28,000 customers were without power. As of 4pm we have managed to restore power to approximately 50% of affected customers," says Orion Chief Executive Rob Jamieson.

"Unfortunately access has proved difficult today, primarily due to fallen trees, and it took some time for us to be able to get to some rural substations safely. We have now reached all substations and are looking to get these back on line which will allow us to determine the extent of the damage throughout the rest of our rural network," continues Mr Jamieson.

"Our crews are working as quickly as they safely can. However, there is extensive damage and so customers need to prepare for the possibility of extended power cuts. If a customer is without power at 4pm today they should prepare for a night without power. In some cases, power could be out for up to five days."

Please check on your neighbours and ask friends and family for help if necessary.

If you see a fallen power line, or a tree on a power line, please stay well clear and call us immediately on 0800 363 9898.

Unless there are significant developments overnight, our next update will be at 7.00am.

ENDS

About Orion

Orion New Zealand Limited owns and operates the electricity distribution network in Christchurch and central Canterbury between the Waimakariri and Rakaia rivers and from the Canterbury coast to Arthur's Pass.

There are 11 electricity network companies in the South Island, each covering a distinct area. There is no geographical overlap between electricity network companies. Our neighbouring network companies are [Mainpower](#) to the north, [Electricity Ashburton](#) to the south and [Westpower](#) to the west.

Orion delivers electricity to 190,000 homes and businesses. We do not generate or sell electricity – those functions are carried out by electricity retailers and generators such as Meridian Energy and Mighty River Power. In very simple terms we are a 'transport company', tasked with distributing electricity within our region. That electricity is supplied to us from Transpower's national grid and is sold to consumers by electricity retailers.

On any given day there are inevitably some power cuts. The nature of electricity means that it is impossible to keep all of the power on all of the time, and we try to strike the right balance between the cost and inconvenience caused by power cuts and the costs to consumers of trying to prevent them.

The laws and regulations that govern electricity distribution companies recognise that on an average day in our region, power cuts that are equivalent to around 400 customers losing power for an hour are to be expected. The regulations also make allowance for those numbers to increase during snow and wind storms and other big weather events.

To view more information about Orion and what we do please see our website at oriongroup.co.nz.