

10.00am Saturday, 26 March 2011

MEDIA RELEASE – Orion Earthquake Response

Two new high voltage overhead lines needed to keep the power on this winter to north-east Christchurch

Orion's electricity network in the north-east of Christchurch is fragile, following the February earthquake. In particular:

- the four large underground (66kV) power cables supplying north-east Christchurch are seriously damaged
- Orion's New Brighton substation on Pages Road has sunk, damaging the building and the electrical equipment onsite.

Due to earthquake damage, the electricity network in north-east Christchurch doesn't have enough capacity to meet heavy demands for electricity as we move into the colder winter months.

Like roads, electricity networks experience 'rush hours' where loading levels peak and capacity is fully utilised. Orion's rush hours typically occur on cold winter mornings when most people start their day over a short period of time, and again on cold evenings when people arrive home from work and turn on their lights, heaters, and cook their evening meal.

At the moment, power supply to the north-eastern suburbs is being maintained because the weather is generally mild and peak loads on the network are lower than they will be in winter.

To keep power on in the colder months and meet peak demand, Orion has had approval from the Civil Defence National Controller to build a new substation in Rawhiti Domain off Keyes Road in New Brighton to replace the existing damaged Orion substation on Pages Road.

Orion also has temporary approval (for up to three years to cover the next three winters) to build:

- a 1.5km extension to an overhead 66kV line built in early March, to run from the existing New Brighton substation to the new substation on Keyes Road
- a new 4.5km overhead 66kV line between Transpower's Bromley substation on Ruru Road to Orion's Dallington substation on Coopers Road/Strathfield Avenue.

For more detail see the two flyers and route maps distributed with this release. These flyers have been distributed to residents in the immediate vicinity of the new lines and substation. A series of community meetings were held yesterday and today and will continue over the next week to discuss the project.

Orion aims to start construction in early April.

ENDS

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