

Media statement

1.00pm, 28 February 2014

Orion wins highest Civil Defence award

Christchurch-based electricity network company Orion has been awarded the prestigious Civil Defence Emergency Management Gold Award. In winning the Gold award, the highest award presented by the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management, Orion was recognised for setting the benchmark for resilience for all lifeline utilities in New Zealand. Orion is the first utility operator to ever win the award.

Civil Defence Minister Nikki Kaye stated that Orion, as recipient of the award, had “made a vital contribution to our wellbeing as a nation”. The award recognises the contribution Orion’s planning, training and readiness for disaster made to the community following the Canterbury earthquakes.

The Ministry of CDEM states that the investment by Orion in strengthened substation buildings, resilient communications and network information systems, and a well led and highly motivated work team, meant that Orion was able to restore power to consumers rapidly following the earthquakes, despite the scale of the damage. Orion’s resilience was to the benefit of its customers, the wider community and civil defence emergency management.

Rob Jamieson, Orion’s CEO, says that “our efforts to enhance the resiliency of our network can be traced back to the 1990s when we seriously examined a report into Canterbury’s vulnerabilities to natural hazards. Our investments since, in seismic strengthening and preparedness for emergencies, meant that power was restored much more quickly after the quakes. Without this work, power may have been out for months in some areas.”

“While the award is great recognition of our past hard work, it’s critical we ensure our network remains resilient enough to protect our community from future disasters that may strike. Consequently, we are continuing to make sound investments in our network for the long term benefit of our community. Being prepared isn’t a job to put off until tomorrow”, continues Mr Jamieson.

The award ceremony was held on Tuesday, 25 February 2014 in Wellington. Mr Jamieson received the award on behalf of Orion.

ENDS



Orion CEO, Rob Jamieson, receiving the Civil Defence Emergency Management Gold Award from Civil Defence Minister Nikki Kaye.



Orion contractors replace damaged 11,000 volt cables in New Brighton following the February 2011 earthquake.