

**Media statement – for immediate release
11.30am, Wednesday 11 September 2013**

Orion continues to assess network after strong winds and trees on lines cut power

Power is out to 17,000 Orion customers this morning, down from 28,000 overnight, after strong winds affected power lines across Orion's electricity distribution network. Most power cuts are due to trees or branches falling onto power lines.

Power has been restored to most of urban Christchurch.

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

"Until we are able to bring the substations back on line, it is difficult to determine the extent of the damage throughout the rest of our rural network. Access is proving very difficult and our crews are working as quickly as they safely can," says Orion Chief Executive Rob Jamieson.

"As access will remain an issue for at least the remainder of today and its clear there is extensive damage, customers need to prepare for the possibility of extended power cuts. In some cases, power could be out for up to five days," continues Mr Jamieson.

"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."

Our next update will be at 4.00pm.

ENDS

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.