

Media Release

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Enhancing network resilience against pole top fires

Western Power is continuing its comprehensive program of work to increase the network's resilience against weather events including mitigating the risk of pole top fires.

Head of Asset Performance Archana Viswanathan said Western Power's pole top fire mitigation program was on track to treat or replace insulators in more than 100,000 locations by mid-2027.

"We're currently treating around 19,000 poles across the Midwest and Wheatbelt, due to be complete by mid-year. Once complete, more than 60,000 poles will have been treated since September 2023," she said.

"In regional areas we've found an innovative way to apply silicone to insulators using helicopters – this boosts pole top fire mitigation reducing potential unplanned power outages for communities.

"Additionally, where an insulator is due for replacement, we're proactively installing silicone insulators which are less prone to dust and pollution build up. Since July 2022, we've replaced more than 11,500 insulators and crossarms across the network.

"As helicopter operations are restricted in the metro area, we've replaced insulators rather than treating them with silicone.

"We also began a trial in the cities of Cockburn, Rockingham and Swan to test the viability of treating insulators with silicone via elevated work platform in metro areas. This trial along with community feedback will help inform the potential broader rollout in the future.

"The roll out of our underground power programs in the metro area is reducing the number of poles that are susceptible to weather related damage including pole top fires.

"We're always exploring new technologies and techniques to help reduce the risk of pole top fires and to ensure continued safe and reliable power supply to the community.

"Pole top fires will continue to be a challenge, particularly with the scale of the network and increased unseasonal weather, but we're doing what they can to mitigate them."

Pole top fires can occur where dust and airborne pollutants accumulate on insulators - particularly following harvest season or in coastal areas due to dust and salt build up. When combined with light rain or humid conditions, this can cause 'tracking' - where electricity flows across the surface of the insulator potentially causing pole-top fires.

When planning these mitigation programs, Western Power prioritises treatments based on bushfire risk which considers terrain and climate.

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About Western Power:

Western Power is a Western Australian State Government owned corporation responsible for building, maintaining and operating an electricity network which connects our 2.3 million customers to traditional and renewable energy sources, delivering a critical service to the community.

We're at the forefront of the energy industry in leveraging new technologies, including integrating microgrid and battery storage solutions. We're planning the grid of the future that's leading the way to a cleaner, brighter and more resilient energy supply for the next generation.

To find out more visit the Western Power website at www.westernpower.com.au

Photos are available upon request.

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