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SP AusNet is keeping the lights on

Throughout May and June, Victorian electricity distributor, SP AusNet, will be improving power reliability for more than 77,000 customers by carrying out a series of works targeted towards the most common causes of power outages - wildlife and adverse weather.

SP AusNet's Manager Network Programs Sid Simon said this project was an indication of the power company's continued commitment to make power supply even more reliable.

"With the help of the latest technology we believe our customers will soon begin to notice the improvement," Mr Simon said.

"Within the electricity distribution network, the 'backbone' sections of the network are known as feeders, because they typically 'feed' power to large numbers of customers, often up to several thousand.

"It is on these 'feeder' powerlines that we're focusing most heavily, to ensure the benefits are delivered to as many customers as possible," he said.

SP AusNet crews recently carried out a review to highlight specific locations where new technology and infrastructure could be installed to make these sections of the network as resilient to weather and animal-related power outages as possible.

Mr Simon said the impact of adverse weather and wildlife on an electricity network was often underestimated, with more than 60 per cent of electricity faults during the last five years caused by these two factors.

"It's for these reasons we're installing technology capable of automatically restoring power within 60 seconds of a fault occurring. This same technology also allows crews to be more precisely directed to the area of a fault when patrolling powerlines, which will also lead to power outages being rectified more quickly," he said.

"This same technology also allows our crews to be more precisely directed to the area of a fault when patrolling powerlines, which will also lead to faster power restoration for customers.

"To help prevent animal-related power outages, we're fitting plastic tubing to powerlines to restrict animals' to poletop infrastructure, which reduces the risk of them contacting powerlines in a way that causes outages.

Mr Simon said SP AusNet also maintained a strong approach to vegetation management, because trees and branches that come into contact with powerlines can also lead to power outages.

"We have a hazardous tree removal program that identifies and removes trees outside the regulated clearance space that are deemed to pose a risk to nearby powerlines. All works in the hazardous tree removal program are carried out by qualified arborists."

"In 2009 SP AusNet invested more than \$10 million towards improving network reliability. This is a commitment we'll look to maintain throughout 2010," Mr Simon said.

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