HUMELINK

Bushfire Safety

FACT SHEET

At Transgrid, we take the risk of bushfire seriously and we understand the damage they can cause to people, their communities and the natural environment.

This factsheet provides important information about how Transgrid will minimise bushfire risks on the proposed HumeLink project.

We know some landowners, communities and other stakeholders have concerns the proposed HumeLink project has the potential to initiate bushfires, fuel bushfires or restrict firefighting efforts in the event of a bushfire.

Throughout the planning and design stages for HumeLink we have listened to these concerns and taken active steps to address them.

As we progress the planning of the proposed HumeLink project, we will continue to work with landowners, the local community, emergency services and other stakeholders to ensure we are doing everything we can to minimise the risk of bushfires.

How has Transgrid assessed bushfire risk in the planning process?

When assessing possible route options for HumeLink, we identify high and very high bushfire prone areas and actively seek to avoid transmission line development in these areas.

As part of HumeLink's corridor selection process, Transgrid has assessed lightning and bushfire risks. We have undertaken a Formal Safety Assessment specifically focused on bushfire risk to identify foreseeable threats posed by our assets and activities that could cause a bushfire, as well as the risk to our assets from bushfire. These assessments considered inputs such as slope and aspect, vegetation (including type and fuel load) and weather. The assessment also identified specific controls required to ensure the risk of bushfire to communities and to Transgrid assets is as low as practicably possible.

Under the requirements of the NSW Electricity Supply Act and Electricity Supply (Safety and Network Management) Regulation, Transgrid is required to design, construct, operate and decommission its electricity network in a manner which supports the:

- safety of members of the public
- safety of persons working on its network
- protection of property
- management of safety risks arising from the protection of the environment; and
- management of safety risks arising from the loss of electricity supply.

National parks and other heavily timbered areas are typically avoided due to the increased risk of outages due to bushfires or damage caused by fallen trees, as prolonged outages can have significant consequences for the community and electricity consumers.

How is Transgrid including bushfire safety in our design?

Throughout the planning process, we conduct technical and environmental investigations, complete technical assessments and collect detailed information from the community and other stakeholders that inform the final design and location of a proposed project. All of these things help us to ensure we are putting the safety of people and the environment first.

As part of the design process, we will also look at new technologies and work closely with technical experts to see how we can improve our management of bushfire safety risks.

We will also complete an Environmental Impact Statement, which will include a bushfire hazard and impact assessment. This assessment will further inform the design and we will provide further information on how we will manage risks.

How will Transgrid reduce risk of bushfires from electricity infrastructure?

It is critical that we reduce the risk of bushfires that may start due to electricity infrastructure, as we understand the devastation bushfires can cause to people's lives, their homes, their livelihoods as well as to the natural environment.

Some of the ways we reduce the risk of bushfires occurring include:

Vegetation management

We conduct regular vegetation management within the easement area, plus look at any other 'hazard trees' outside the easement.

We undertake annual aerial inspections of transmission line easements to identify trees and tall shrubs growing too close to transmission lines that could create a public safety or bushfire risk. We then trim or remove the trees and shrubs to maintain safety clearances. Tower and pole base areas may have additional clearing for maintenance access and to reduce the risk of impact by fire.

Our vegetation management activities may include:

- removal of tall growing species
- trimming of trees
- slashing and mulching of easements
- re-growth control using herbicides.

Asset inspections and maintenance

We routinely inspect our transmission network to identify defects and undertake any necessary maintenance to minimise bushfire risks. In some cases, if there is an increased risk of asset failure we will remove or replace the asset.

Limiting activities near assets and in easements

High voltages have the ability to arc large distances or induce voltages into nearby structures. We have easements over our network that allow us to safely construct, operate and maintain structures and electricity lines.

To minimise the risk to public safety, we limit certain activities within easements including tree heights, certain storage activities, building heights, plant and vehicle heights, building materials and certain recreation activities.

For more information on Transgrid's maintenance program and bushfire risk management, please visit our website Managing bush fire risk | Transgrid

What will Transgrid do in the case of a bushfire?

In addition to reducing bushfire risk through vegetation management and asset inspection and maintenance, Transgrid is involved in fire mitigation through attending key bushfire management committees (BFMC) meetings. These meetings are held with the Rural Fire Service (RFS), key government land managers, local government, utilities, associations and other land managers. We also work with government land managers, for example National Parks and Wildlife Services and WaterNSW in providing assistance in mitigation burns (Hazard Reduction Burns).

In cases of bushfires near our network, we work closely with emergency services when required. Although Transgrid does not directly manage the fire response, we act as a liaison to assist emergency services, which can be through RFS HQ (Homebush) or locally in RFS control or incident management centres across the state, with key staff acting as liaison officers.

We work closely with the emergency services to ensure they can carry out operations around our network and have the information they need to respond to a bushfire.

How can landowners assist?

You can help to minimise bushfire risk by:

Reporting issues

Try to identify the operator of the assets and call the relevant emergency number whenever you see issues such as:

- fallen powerlines – remember stand clear of fallen powerlines as these can induce dangerous voltages many metres from the conductor
- damaged power poles or tower structures
- vegetation and tree encroachment of powerlines
- fires near transmission lines

Information for emergency services

The National Guidelines on Electrical Safety for Emergency Personnel provides critical information relating specifically to fire control near transmission lines. This includes special conditions that apply to the use of water in fire control activities. Please contact us if you have any queries regarding application of the guideline at our assets. If you are involved in fire management or control near transmission lines, please familiarise yourself with these guidelines and the recommended control measures. A full version of the industry guidelines may be purchased from www.saiglobal.com or by calling 131 242.

Important safety information for emergency services when firefighting and bushfire prevention activities includes:

- any firefighting or fuel reduction activities to be carried out in the vicinity of Transgrid powerlines shall be in consultation with Transgrid
- live powerlines can arc to surfaces without warning under conditions of intense heat, smoke, flame and water vapour caused by fire and firefighting activities
- the powerline shall be considered live unless advised otherwise by Transgrid staff on site
- at no time shall streams of water be directed above head height on a Transgrid easement
- emergency services may 'water bomb' on/around transmission lines – please keep us informed of these activities as they may impact the longer term performance of the network
- machinery shall be limited to 4.3m in height when on an easement.

If you see a fire

If you see a fire burning underneath or near a transmission line and property or lives are at risk, ring emergency services immediately by calling Triple Zero (000).

All fires underneath or near a transmission line should be reported to us as soon as possible by calling our emergencies line on 1800 027 253, even if you are unsure what risk they pose.

In the event of a bushfire, you may encounter fallen or sagging powerlines across roads or other access routes from your residence. Please factor this into your bushfire emergency plan.

For more information about fire safety, preparedness and management, please visit the RFS website.

Transgrid

Contact the project team:
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Find out more at:
transgrid.com.au/HumeLink