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## SAPN'S HOT POLICIES PROTECT WORKERS FROM CLIMATE CHANGE

Facing unprecedented climate change, SA Power Networks (SAPN) is taking action to protect its workers from the rising severity and frequency of extreme temperatures, storms and bushfires. To tackle these volatile climate conditions, SAPN has developed a climate-related Risks and Opportunities Register, a series of protocols that address occupational health and safety risks for staff and vulnerable customers alike.

### **SAFETY FIRST! LONG-LONGS, HYDRATION AND FATIGUE HOURS**

Australians are some of the toughest people in the world, with a penchant for cutesy abbreviations (“barbie”, “uni”, “footy” and “mozzies” anyone?). “Long-longs”, which to some sounds like it might be the name of a new panda joining Wang Wang at the Adelaide Zoo, is ready to join the list.

This year, SAPN introduced a “long-longs” policy for its personal protective clothing (PPC), replacing shorts and short sleeves with long trousers and long sleeves. “PPC is an important safety control to protect people from harm”, says Max Altschwager, Senior Manager of Field Operations Powerline. This change ensures that workers have better protection from cancer-causing ultraviolet (UV) sun rays while working in the field, a long-time national concern in this sun-drenched continent.

To prevent risks caused by fatigue, SAPN also limits operational staff to a maximum of 12 hours for planned work and 16 hours for emergency work within a 24-hour period. Workers are also required to take a minimum 10-hour break at home before returning to work. A digital project is currently underway to enable real-time visibility of fatigue hours, allowing employees to monitor their work limits via a mobile app.



In addition, SAPN has a proactive approach that keeps safety at the forefront of operations. Each field-based depot holds toolbox meetings where staff discuss safety considerations, such as driving in hot weather, bushfire risks and concerns relating to the day's work requirements.

## **STAY SAFE WITH WEATHER FORECASTING**

Using cutting-edge tools and techniques to anticipate extreme weather conditions is another key part of SAPN's strategy to protect its employees.

All field and network operations teams receive daily forecast information from the Emergency Management team, which includes data on wind conditions, thunderstorms and other potential hazards. This information, provided up to five days in advance, helps depots plan their workforce needs so that enough staff and resources are prepared and available for any outages.



SAPN also collaborates with both the government Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and Weatherzone (a private Australian company providing weather data to mining, energy and utilities firms) to provide accurate, detailed weather forecasts tailored to its network. SAPN also relies on heatwave indicators from the government-run State Emergency Service and the BOM, which alert the company and the public of any imminent severe heatwaves. In light of other severe conditions, SAPN's Network Operations Centre and Emergency Management team monitor weather conditions closely, sending out alerts and bulletins across the network so that field staff are warned in time and can adjust accordingly.

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## KEEPING THE BUSHFIRES AT BAY

Extreme heat is drying out large swathes of Australia’s bushland – and that means more fires. Adapting to the increase in bushfires in the region, SAPN’s Bushfire Risk Management Plan plays a vital role in protecting its workers and assets from fire hazards. Risk assessments must be done before crew travel, and only essential works can be undertaken during high Fire Danger Level conditions.

“Our bushfire mitigation programme includes both preventative and operational measures”, says Vlorá Dzeladini, SAPN’s Network Emergency Manager. The Elevated Extreme and Catastrophic Fire Danger Directive advises workers when they must undertake a risk assessment to conduct work under high bushfire risk conditions. The assessment demands inspections of assets and vegetation to comply with legislation and prevent bushfire risks, as well as using protection equipment to clear faults on power lines instantaneously. In extreme cases, SAPN may disconnect power to prevent potential fires.

The Powerline Operations team also conducts annual simulation exercises to prepare teams for “avalanche” scenarios, where an influx of emergency jobs are needed due to severe weather conditions (e.g. bushfires, storm events or flooding) and that number exceeds available SAPN crew and resources. Each depot is equipped with bushfire support packs, including checklists and templates to guide teams during emergencies. SAPN has also implemented mandatory online bushfire training with annual refreshers to ensure that all staff are well prepared.

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By using cutting-edge tech to design comprehensive safety measures around bushfires and heatwaves, SAPN is acting on its commitment to the health and safety of its employees and customers. From something as simple as long-longs to using the world's most advanced weather forecasting tools, SAPN is stepping up to navigate the challenges of our changing environment.