



MEDIA RELEASE – Damaged Copper Earths

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In an appeal to the community to take extra care, TasNetworks is warning people to stay well away from damaged or vandalised electrical infrastructure in order to avoid being harmed.

This warning follows the recent incidences of copper earth damage where vandals strip high-voltage power poles of their copper cables. These cables are part of the built-in safety features of the electricity network.

“When earths are removed, it means electricity cannot safely return to the ground. Instead, electricity from the transformer will spread as far as fifteen metres around the impacted power pole,” TasNetworks Health Safety and Environment Leader Adrian Daniels said.

While the electricity network is configured safely, interference by vandals presents serious risk to public safety. Vandals are endangering their own lives, those of our crews who have to repair damage and members of our community. It is important that people stay well away from all components of the electricity network and understand the dangers.

TasNetworks warns in-built protection systems may be compromised because of the damage as customers rely on network earths to protect their dwelling if a broken house neutral is present. Furthermore, damage to copper earths cause unwanted disruptions to the services Tasmanians rely on. During times of unplanned outages, missing earths mean distribution lines are unable to self-clear faults, resulting in longer outage times for customers.

TasNetworks has a range of strategies in place to try to deter copper earth vandalism, including coordination with Tasmania Police and Crime Stoppers, communication with councils, state regulators and legislators as well as alternative equipment and wire evaluation. TasNetworks is currently trialling new technologies to mitigate the occurrence of vandalism.

Copper earth damage is an issue of delivery, reliability, and, above all, safety. Tasmania Police and Crime Stoppers are paying increasing attention to copper earth vandalism.

“Police have been working in partnership with TasNetworks and focusing for several months on copper vandalism in the area and we’ve seen a significant reduction in offences as a result,” Senior Sergeant Nick Clark said.

TasNetworks will continue to monitor the situation and actively work with stakeholders to address this issue into the future.

If you see someone trespassing, vandalising or acting suspiciously near TasNetworks infrastructure, call Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000