

Safety Alert – 170517-1

Wednesday, 17 May 2017

Live low voltage work

In the past 12 months, IPART has been notified of multiple incidents relating to the undertaking of live low voltage (LV) work. The incidents have included accidents involving actual and potential life threatening injuries to electrical workers and have raised concerns about the management of worker safety in relation to live work.

Network operators have a legal obligation to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the design, construction, commissioning, operation and decommissioning of its network are safe.¹

Where live work is being considered, network operators should where reasonably practicable, eliminate the hazard of live work and associated risks by de-energising as a first preference.²

Where it is not reasonably practicable to de-energise or otherwise eliminate the hazard or associated risks of live work, the formal safety assessments must identify the treatment or controls to be applied in line with the standard hierarchy of controls. This means that physical or engineering controls should be used in preference to procedural managerial controls.³

Networks must also:

- ensure that they have appropriate planning processes and procedures in place to ensure safety in a live work situation⁴
- have control measures incorporated into live work procedures⁵
- ensure that the responsibilities, accountabilities and authority levels of personnel or contractors with respect to the work are identified,⁶ and
- ensure that anyone involved in planning or undertaking the work is trained and competent.⁷

These obligations are explicitly addressed in AS 5577 *Electricity network safety management systems* and in most cases apply to work undertaken by network personnel as well as contractors such as Accredited Service Providers.

The networks' management of the risks associated with live work, identified through incident reporting and inspections or investigations may be used to inform future audits of safety management systems.

¹ *Electricity Supply (Safety and Network Management) Regulation 2014* (the **Safety Regulation**), cl 5

² AS 5577 Appendix A4 Risk Treatment; the Safety Regulation, cl 7(1)(a)

³ AS 5577 Appendix A4 Risk Treatment

⁴ AS 5577 s. 4.3.1

⁵ AS 5577 s. 4.3.2

⁶ AS 5577 s 4.4.4

⁷ AS 5577 s. 4.4.5