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Storm event impact worst in ten years

Preliminary analysis by ETSA Utilities has found the damaging storm that hit South Australia on Saturday was the worst in the past ten years in terms of impact on the electricity network.

"We've had a look at our records since we adopted our current outage measurement system in 2000 and have found the storm was by far the worst we have had since then," said General Manager Services, Sue Filby.

"We measure the overall impact on customers through a measure called SAIDI, which is the total duration of all customer interruptions averaged over all customers.

"The storm will add more than 46 minutes to the annual total, which has averaged 175 minutes in the past five years.

"So, on the weekend, we effectively had outages accounting for about a quarter to a third of our average annual total!

"In terms of outage minutes, it was twice as severe as the previous worst storm in August 2005 which contributed about 23 minutes to SAIDI.

"That reflects the widespread nature of the storm, the severity of the damage caused and our need to prioritise safety-related work due to the many powerlines brought down by the strong winds and trees."

Falling vegetation and winds gusting to 120 kmh impacted electricity supply mainly across metropolitan Adelaide and the Adelaide Hills, but also the West Coast, Fleurieu Peninsula, Kangaroo Island, Yorke Peninsula and Mid-North.

"Fortunately on the Friday afternoon we were planning for the storm by increasing our available resources – even before the Bureau of Meteorology upgraded the severity of the weather warning," Ms Filby said.

"In total there were 248 interruptions, affecting about 130,000 customers and generating around 1,000 associated jobs – including wires down and debris on powerlines – that were completed by ETSA Utilities crews."

Many jobs were complex, involving multiple crews working for more than 10 hours.

"We also received a record number of calls from customers, with 38,400 calls received over the three days of the storm and 34,500 of these on Saturday alone – this is about 8,500 more calls than the previous daily record set during the 2009 heatwave," Ms Filby said.

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About ETSA Utilities

ETSA Utilities is South Australia's electricity distributor, delivering electricity to more than 800,000 customers. We are one of South Australia's largest organisations, employing about 1800 people throughout metropolitan and regional SA. ETSA Utilities is 51 percent owned by Cheung Kong Infrastructure Holdings Limited and Hongkong Electric Holdings, which form part of the Cheung Kong Group of companies. The remaining 49 percent is owned by ASX-listed Spark Infrastructure.