



Performance of ETSA Utilities during Severe Weather Event of July 2010

❖ **Key Points:**

- *From the evening of Friday 9 July 2010 and across the following weekend, severe weather conditions were experienced in South Australia, with extended periods of rain and strong wind in many centres across the state. One impact of those severe weather conditions was widespread power outages across the electricity distribution network operated by ETSA Utilities, affecting up to 130,000 customers state-wide.*
- *The prevailing conditions caused difficulties for ETSA Utilities in restoring supply to those affected by the outages. In addition, the significant nature of the outages lead to a very large number of customers contacting ETSA Utilities' customer call centre, with the highest individual peak day call rate ever recorded of 34,565 calls.*
- *While only preliminary data is available, unlike some previous extreme weather events, in particular the heatwave which occurred in January 2006, it does not initially appear that there were any systemic operational issues which impacted on ETSA Utilities' ability to deal with outages in an orderly way or to respond to customers' calls.*
- *A copy of the full report is available on the Commission website at www.escosa.sa.gov.au*

❖ **Severity of event**

This was a severe weather event. Wind gusts exceeded 90 km/h in many South Australian centres during the July 2010 severe weather event, with the highest recorded wind gust of 126km/h at Cape Willoughby on Kangaroo Island, while in the Mount Lofty Ranges and Adelaide region the highest recorded wind gust was 111km/h at Mount Crawford.

The Bureau of Meteorology has observed that whilst such an event occurs once or twice on average each winter over South Australia, some factors explaining why the impact was so severe include that strong winds persisted for an extended period, and from a more northerly direction rather than the more usual westerly direction seen with this type of event.

❖ **Supply Outages**

Around 130,000 customers were affected by power outages, representing around 16% of ETSA Utilities' customer base. The longest outage duration was 38.9 hours.

ETSA Utilities' expects that around 6,700 customers will be entitled to some level of Guaranteed Service Level (GSL) payment, meaning that these customers faced an outage of at least 12 hours duration,

representing 5.1% of the total number of customers affected by the event. The estimated number of customers affected by outages of more than 24 hours was 1,262 (1% of the total number of affected customers).

❖ **Performance by ETSA Utilities**

The Commission's role is to attempt to determine whether ETSA Utilities' preparation and supply restoration performance, and customer service performance were at levels expected within the overall nature of the electricity distribution system it operates in South Australia.

Unlike some previous extreme weather events, in particular the heatwave which occurred in January 2006, it does not initially appear that there were any systemic operational issues which impacted on ETSA Utilities' ability to deal with outages in an orderly way or to respond to customers' calls.

Table A (Table 1 of the Commission's report) provides the key performance data for Saturday 10 July 2010. This data reinforces the significance of the event and the impact it will have on the ability for ETSA Utilities to achieve its annual performance targets.

Based on initial observations, the Commission does not take issue with the broad priority setting that ETSA Utilities' advice was used in this event to restore power to customers, namely first priority given to safety (e.g. around 380 reports of fallen wires), then outages on High Voltage lines (to maximise the number of customers able to have power restored) and then outages on Low Voltage lines.

The Commission also does not have reason to dispute ETSA Utilities' advice that it had an appropriate number of crews available in the field to restore power, noting the need to manage its crews to ensure sufficient manpower was available to handle any extended period for the event.

The Commission notes that importance of ETSA Utilities liaising with the Bureau of Meteorology so that it receives as much prior warning as possible of the potential for damaging winds to affect its network.

On the basis of most of the telephone responsiveness performance measures the call centre performed well during the July 2010 severe weather event. Refer Table B (Table 3 of the Commission report), for key telephone call centre performance data. The only measure of concern was in relation to those customers seeking to speak directly to an operator as opposed to being satisfied with the information provided via the automatic IVR

system. The average wait time to talk to an operator was 8 minutes and 30 seconds, which whilst better than the performance achieved in the January 2006 heatwave, was not as good as the performance achieved during recent heatwave events.

Nevertheless, ETSA Utilities faced its highest peak day telephone call volume experienced of 34,565 calls.

The Commission will further review ETSA Utilities' performance in relation to the July 2010 severe weather event when it has received finalised data relating to the event.

Table A – Performance data – Saturday 10 July 2010

Reliability Impact - HV & LV Interruptions						
ESCOSA Region	Total Customers	Customers Affected	SAIDI (minutes)	SAIFI	Restoration Times	No. of Events
Adelaide Business Area	4,800	0	0	0	0	0
Central	102,008	10,512	27.99	0.103	272	24
Major Metropolitan Areas	593,299	96,581	48.20	0.163	296	157
Eastern Hills/Fleurieu Pen.	59,949	14,726	88.52	0.246	360	46
Kangaroo Island	3,815	3,953	243.12	1.036	235	5
South East	28,899	2	0.01	0.000	201	2
Upper North/Eyre Peninsula	38,907	4,492	75.70	0.115	656	14
Totals	831,677	130,266	48.85	0.157	312	248

Table B: Call Centre data, July 2010 severe weather event

Date	No. calls Received	No. calls Abandoned	No. calls answered by IVR	No. calls answered by operator	No of calls unanswered	Av. wait time m:s	Calls answered in 30 sec
9/07/2010	1,221	17	837	367	0	00:09	94.2%
10/07/2010	34,565	1,612	29,338	3,615	0	01:11	87.0%
11/07/2010	2,661	205	1,576	880	0	02:11	81.5%
	38,447	1,834	31,751	4,862	0	01:13	86.8%