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**25 February 2010**

## **POWERCOR TO RUN INNOVATIVE HELICOPTER SURVEY THROUGHOUT WESTERN VICTORIA**

Powercor will conduct a state-of-the-art helicopter survey to identify potential bushfire risks and reduce the possibility of power outages caused by vegetation touching power lines.

The program will launch from Ballarat Airport today, taking in rural powerlines throughout the local area before moving into other regions including Maryborough, Hamilton and the Colac Otways over the next fortnight.

This Light Detection and Ranging Measurement (LiDAR) survey involves the use of a laser measuring unit mounted on a helicopter to measure the distances between the ground, power lines and surrounding vegetation. The unit determines how close vegetation is growing near powerlines.

The technology works on the basis that the speed of light is a known quantity. Therefore the time it takes for light to reflect from the helicopter to the ground and back again can be measured to determine the distance between surrounding objects such as vegetation and powerlines.

Powercor places critical importance on ensuring sufficient vegetation clearances are maintained near powerlines to keep the community and its electricity network bushfire safe. LiDAR technology is being used to enhance Powercor's routine ground based clearance checks by covering far greater territory in rapid time.

Powercor Regional Asset Manager Ross Irving said LiDAR technology has been used in broad acre surveying for several years - but new applications including this survey, have developed as experience in using the technology and its availability increases.

"Powercor's LiDAR survey will carry out surveying works from an altitude of around 90 metres (300 feet) which is around twice the altitude from which fixed wing aircraft inspections are made," Mr Irving said.

"This increased distance provides significant safety benefits and reduces noise.

"The laser pulse emitted by the LiDAR unit uses an infrared light, which is not visible to the human eye and is used in many modern applications such as TV remote controls and speed cameras.

"We will have the trial results within a few weeks of the conclusion of each flight before a more extensive analysis is completed. Any areas found to fall outside of the required specifications will be logged and then fixed," he said.

Mr Irving said Powercor would also continue a program of annual powerline condition audits involving more than 50 employees from all levels across the business, including the CEO, in the lead up to and during the fire danger season.

These inspections are part of an extensive, year long program to identify and rectify any potential bushfire risks and include general maintenance and vegetation clearances activities.

**Media inquiries: Powercor Australia's 24-hour media service on (03) 9683 4342**

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