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SA distribution network facing unprecedented test

South Australia is entering its most difficult period for potential power failures.

Sue Filby, General Manager, Services, said "we are very pleased with the way the distribution network has stood up to the heatwave so far. But, the reality is that we are really in uncharted territory, as we are facing an unprecedented extended period of hot weather in South Australia.

"We are particularly monitoring forecast high electricity demand and high temperatures from today (Thursday) into the weekend."

Ms Filby said ETSA had been reviewing resources and would be doubling the usual number of crews on standby in both metropolitan and regional areas.

"High electricity demand during periods of very hot weather places the network under stress as equipment is running flat out to meet demand and does not get the chance to cool down.

"The more days and nights of hot temperatures, the greater the risk."

Ms Filby said ETSA Utilities had invested \$150 million in the past two years to improve network reliability. This, plus some reasonably cool nights during the March heatwave, had helped contain equipment failures.

"In fact, at this stage we have probably had fewer outages than we might have expected through such prolonged hot weather.

"However, with the heatwave conditions likely to continue into next week, the electricity distribution network is being placed under unprecedented stress.

"While we can't guarantee continuity of supply in these extreme conditions, we'll do everything in our power to minimise disruption."

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About ETSA Utilities

ETSA Utilities is South Australia's electricity distributor, delivering energy from the transmission network through poles, wires, substations and transformers to more than 793,000 customers. With more than 60 years experience, we are one of South Australia's largest organisations which employs more than 1700 people throughout metropolitan and regional South Australia.

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 Spark Infrastructure. Spark Infrastructure began trading on the ASX in December 2005.