

OPERATION OF HV SWITCHGEAR

This alert has been generated to ensure that all sites in Victoria are aware of the risks associated with the operation of HV Switchgear.

For some time now the Power Industry has steered away from the once established practice of routine switchgear maintenance. Formerly there was an established maintenance regime that ensured all switchgear was periodically maintained and calibrated to manufacturer's specifications. This was relied upon to ensure that any person operating the switchgear was provided the best protection possible from failure or incorrect operation along with protection of the network.

Following multiple incidents where switches have failed, incorrectly operated and/or injured workers, the ETU strongly advises that no worker should operate any HV switching device unless the following has been satisfied:

- Periodic 3-yearly inspection and maintenance must be proven and documented. This ensures that switchgear is in a safe and satisfactory operating condition at all times. Without routine inspections and maintenance, the switchgear will not perform its functions satisfactorily and poses an immediate risk to workers, the network and the public.
- Inspection and maintenance must be done by appropriately trained and qualified trades persons working to written works instructions in accordance with manufacturer specifications and guidelines.

- Maintenance and calibration records must be up-to-date and available at all times.
- Before any employee is required to operate any switchgear, employers must provide proof of satisfactory maintenance and inspection, and:
 1. A risk assessment of the task being undertaken.
 2. A manual handling and ergonomics assessment that documents the loads and stresses placed on the employee.
 3. Adequate measures must be put in place to mitigate any risks or hazards identified.

It is the recommendation of the ETU that if any of the above is not satisfied work **should cease, your manager should be notified of the non compliance and the switchgear should be tagged out as inoperable.**

All HSRs and Shop Stewards should provide this safety alert to their management and request it be adhered to immediately.

Should management disregard this advice, members should ensure an incident report is lodged stating that management have given an unlawful instruction. Your HSR and ETU Shop Steward should be notified and your ETU organiser should be contacted immediately.

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