



Safety Advice 43-2013 (Nov) (NZ)

The following Safety Alert courtesy of Vector outlines the recent Hepburn Road GXP circuit breaker explosion incident and includes precautions for persons who may be in the vicinity of live equipment that is making discharge noise. The incident is under investigation and any further advice will be released as a supplementary Safety Advice.

The full Safety Advice follows below.

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What Happened?

The Vector-owned P1172 circuit breaker in Transpower's Hepburn Road Grid Exit Point switchyard exploded on Thursday 7 November after a fault that was first thought to be the result of a lightning storm in the area, but may, in fact, be due to an internal fault caused by bushing modifications made many years ago. One or more breaker components inside the tank are suspected to have failed.

No one was injured in the explosion and the cause of failure is now under investigation.

Collateral damage included the loss of the adjacent breaker (P1192), and the ensuing fireball caused significant damage to the Transpower outdoor 33kV bus resulting in 42000 customers losing power for some time.



What Has Been Done to Fix the Problem?

Immediate action was taken to make the area safe. The 33kV bus was sectionalised and the damaged section isolated. An inspection was carried out to ensure the situation was safe and power was restored.

What Will Happen Next?

Personnel must not approach equipment that is making a discharge noise and should immediately report such equipment so it can be taken out of service and investigated. More tests need to be carried out to determine the root cause of this incident and a Lessons Learnt document will be issued when this is known. There are a number of these circuit breakers on the Vector network and their locations are listed on the following page for information.

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