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Media Release

Not a Hollywood film: Powercor crews call in the 'Spider'

Anyone hiking in the hills behind Wye River's picturesque coastline earlier this month might have been forgiven for thinking they'd stumbled onto the set of the latest Hollywood blockbuster.

That's because stalking through the forest was a machine with arms, legs and wheels - resembling something like a *Transformer* – extra-terrestrial robots made famous by comics, cartoons and the enormously popular film series.

Curious hikers would have witnessed Powercor crews using a type of specialist excavator known as the 'Spider' to help navigate the incredibly steep terrain in the area.

It was the first time the technology had been used in the Powercor network, with works at Wye River taking place to support the rollout of the National Broadband Network (NBN).

The work included replacing power poles, installing new poles and moving high voltage conductors to higher ground.

Powercor construction crews from Colac used the 'Spider' which 'walks' on mechanical legs separate from its four large wheels, to work at inclines of up to 43 degrees which make the job impossible for standard vehicles.

The project at Wye River required four months of planning to minimise the community impact, execute a plan for the complex terrain and also minimise the impact to the environment.

The team looked at a range of different excavation technologies for the complex project.

Powercor Construction Project Leader, Jack Horner, said the Spider excavator was the perfect choice to minimise impact on the environment, reduce manual handling risk to field crews and avoid the need for substantial civil works.

"Without this unit we probably would have had to construct an access road to get to the work site," Mr Horner said.

"This was the first time we have used this equipment and after seeing it in action – it's hopefully not the last.

"It's a very versatile excavator and completed all of the vegetation mulching, hole drilling and pole installations. The crews onsite were extremely impressed with its ability to navigate the steep terrain and the operator's skills and focus on ensuring the safety of everyone on site."

'Spider' excavator fast facts

- Weighs 15 tonnes
- Measures 2.3m wide when compressed but can extend out to a footprint of over 7 metres
- Has more lift capabilities than a 30-tonne excavator and can work on any terrain due to a winch that enables it to lift and lower itself like a spider.

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For more information call Powercor's media line on (03) 9683 4342



Background – Powercor

Powercor distributes electricity to 850,000 customers across the western suburbs of Melbourne and through central and western Victoria to the South Australian and New South Wales borders. Electricity is distributed in the region via a network comprising over 88,400 kilometres of wires, supported by more than 577,420 poles and associated infrastructure.

Residential households account for 86 per cent of connections. Our customers are dispersed over a wide geographic area in a density of just 12 people per square kilometre.

Our network also supports 11,200 medium, commercial and industrial businesses and 106,500 small businesses dominated by health care and social assistance, agriculture, forestry and fishing. These businesses generate 25 per cent of Victoria's Gross Domestic Product.

Our teams operate from 13 depots, our Bendigo-based customer contact centre and our CBD headquarters, to deliver reliable, safe and affordable electricity by operating, managing and maintaining all network assets and metering services. This means managing a network that is reliable and safe, particularly in relation to bushfire risks.