

# Safety Alert 191209-1

13 December 2019

## Serious burns sustained whilst operating high voltage switchgear

Two workers have sustained serious burn injuries while working on network assets.<sup>1</sup> Information provided by the network operator indicates that a **catastrophic failure occurred within an oil filled ABB SDAF metal clad switch while operating work was being performed**. IPART understands that Andelect and ABB branded SD-series metal clad switches are similar equipment.



Image taken at site by a SafeWork NSW inspector after the accident

In response to the incident, the network operator has put operating restrictions in place (see details below).

<sup>1</sup> The incident occurred on 9 December 2019.

## **Details of the network operator's operating restrictions**

As a precautionary measure and effective immediately, the network operator has put the following operating restrictions in place:

- All distribution High Voltage (HV) oil filled switchgear is to be de-energised prior to local operation, with the HV conductors feeding the switchgear remotely isolated.
- Re-energisation shall only be completed via a remote switch, with the substation that the switch is housed in vacated and secured to prevent access during these operating activities.
- The operating restriction applies to all planned and unplanned work tasks.
- There are no additional restrictions regarding general access to substations containing HV oil filled switchgear and remote operating work may continue as per normal practice.

## **Where can HV oil filled switchgear be found?**

HV oil filled switchgear may be found in some electricity distribution networks, high voltage customer installations, mines and other facilities including electricity generation and transmission facilities.

## **Is action required by network operators?**

Network operators may consider it necessary to assess the types of high voltage switchgear in their networks (particularly HV oil filled switchgear), review the risk controls they have in place, and implement the appropriate level of risk controls to eliminate or reduce risks so far as is reasonably practicable.

## **SafeWork NSW investigation**

SafeWork NSW inspectors responded to the incident. SafeWork NSW commenced an investigation to determine the cause and the circumstances of the incident. IPART is supporting SafeWork NSW in its investigation.