

## **NSW introduces new dial-before-you-dig laws**

People who damage or interfere with electricity supply cables will face tougher penalties, with new laws designed to protect vital power infrastructure passing the New South Wales Parliament. NSW Energy Minister Ian Macdonald says the new laws make it mandatory for contractors to notify electricity suppliers if they have damaged a cable and to seek advice before they start to excavate. "Under the laws, any person who needs to excavate and undertake building work is required to first contact Dial Before You Dig and allow a reasonable period of time for the utilities to provide locations of their underground assets," says Macdonald. "If this does not happen, they may face a fine of up to \$2,200. If an electricity cable or gas pipe is damaged, penalties have been increased up to \$440,000 for corporations, or \$22,000 and five years jail for individuals." Dial Before You Dig is a free national service that provides advice on the location of underground pipes and cables. Around 70 per cent of all power interruptions are due to factors beyond the control of the networks, including people accidentally digging up cables, tress falling or storms. "That's why we have moved to make it compulsory for network operators to belong to the Dial Before You Dig program," Macdonald says. "The NSW Department of Water and Energy will work closely with energy businesses and civil contractors in developing the detailed regulations that will complement these new laws."

**Source: esaa news – Issue 22, 8 June 2009**