



Energy Bulletin 3

An Important Year Concludes

For many working in WA's energy sector, the 1994/95 year will be well remembered.

Major changes were implemented - SECWA ceased to function and in its place arose AlintaGas, Western Power and the Office of Energy.

The progressive opening of energy markets to competition, through the provision of access to transmission and distribution facilities, commenced on 1 January 1995

in respect of gas transmission. Many significant energy-related projects (eg. the Goldfields gas transmission pipeline) were announced or commenced during the year.

The Office of Energy became the Government's independent energy policy and regulatory agency. Its Technical & Safety Division, which is based at Leederville, worked hard to establish itself during the first half of 1995. As its head, I am pleased to advise industry that the 'set-up' phase is now completed in most respects.

Our four small country offices are also manned.

This edition of the 'Bulletin' has as its main theme an overview of the Technical & Safety Division's 1994/95 activities and results, plus details of industry's overall electrical and gas safety outcomes.

Industry safety performance data is important information that I would urge all our readers to study. Many can take steps to improve their own contribution in this area, by better personal or business safety management. I am referring particularly to electrical accidents - I believe their frequency and severity can be significantly reduced. Four accidental electrocutions during 1994/95 is simply not acceptable.

While this edition concentrates on over-viewing the past year, it also includes a number of articles about new regulatory initiatives and issues.

I trust you will find this information interesting.

ALBERT KOENIG

DIRECTOR OF ENERGY SAFETY

Since its inception on 1 January 1995, the Technical and Safety Division of the Office of Energy has continued to carry out regulatory functions that were previously undertaken by SECWA.

Four new Acts came into place on 1 January 1995:

Electricity Corporation Act - established the new corporatised electricity, generation and distribution corporation known as Western Power

Gas Corporation Act - created the new corporatised gas transportation and distribution corporation, AlintaGas, This provided access regimes for the gas transmission and distribution systems

Energy Coordination Act - created the offices of the Coordinator of Energy and Director of Energy Safety which took over SECWA's regulatory powers and functions

Energy corporations (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Act - dissolved SECWA and vested some powers in the new corporations, allocated assets and liabilities and vested other powers in the new Coordinator of Energy and Director of Energy Safety.

Accident prevention and other regulatory strategies covering energy supply quality and energy use efficiency now favour light-handed regulation, whereby utilities, licensed operators and equipment manufacturers/ distributors are required to comply with certain industry standards and codes. Self-certification is used where practicable. Third party certification is required where risks are greater. Auditing, rather than total inspection, is used by regulators to monitor industry performance.

Strong emphasis is now also placed on training systems and safety awareness. Regulatory strategies therefore seek to support this approach.

Experience so far has shown, however, that regulators must monitor (and where necessary, guide) many aspects of industry conduct. This is to make sure the commitment to safety and other outcomes does not reduce in the face of financial pressures resulting from increased trading competition.

The Technical and Safety Division is structured under five branches:

Technical Services Branch - establishes appropriate standards for the technical and safety regulatory framework; liaises with industry; approves electrical and gas

appliances and equipment; promotes energy safety and efficient energy usage.

Electrical Inspection Branch - investigates reports of serious electrical incidents (eg. accidents, non-compliance by licensed operatives); audits industry work practices; audits technical standards of utilities and independent power producers; monitors the activities of installation inspectors employed by electricity utilities. In addition to its regulatory inspection functions, the Electrical Inspection Branch is responsible for carrying out mines electrical inspections throughout the State, on behalf of the Department of Minerals and Energy. Inspection staff are located in metropolitan and country offices throughout the State, as part of this Branch.

Gas Inspection Branch - investigates reports of serious gas incidents (eg. accidents, non-compliance by licensed operatives); audits industry work practices; audits technical standards of utilities and independent gas producers; monitors the activities of installation inspectors and gas fitters employed by gas utilities.

Regulatory Services Branch - administers the licensing of electrical works, contractors; in-house installers and gas fitters; provides support the Electrical Licensing Board and also for any inquiries in respect of the conduct of gas fitters.

Corporate Services Branch - because of its separate location from other Divisions the Technical and Safety Division has its own financial, administrative, human resources and information technology support staff.

Key activities and achievements of the Division are summarised below.

A New Industry Publication

The Energy Bulletin was launched to keep both electricity and gas utilities (including LPG suppliers), independent power and gas producers, consulting engineers and licensed electrical/gas operatives informed of energy related regulatory policies, requirements and developments.

The Energy Bulletin is formatted to cover both general regulatory issues and separate segments "Gas Focus" and "Electrical Focus" for industry specific information.

Important topics to date have included:

- the role of the Office of Energy under the Coordinator of Energy

- the role of the Technical and Safety Division under the Director of Energy Safety

guidelines for the technical and safety requirements of powerplant

approval requirements for electrical and gas appliances including Type B (industrial) gas appliances

safety news for industry.

Electricity Supplies to the Public

Under the provisions of the Electricity Act those supplying electricity to the public must be registered with the Office of Energy as Electricity Supply Authorities.

Western Australia's seven Electricity Supply Authorities are:

BHP Iron Ore, operator at Newman

Hamersley Iron Pty Ltd, operating at Dampier, Tom Price and Paraburdoo

Newcrest Mining Ltd, operating at Telfer

Rottnest Island Authority, operating at Rottnest Island

Robe River Iron Associates, operating at Wickham and Pannawonica

Western Mining Corporation, operating at Leinster

Western Power, operating an interconnected transmission and distribution system in the South-West of the State and also operating in remote towns, using local generation.

In January 1995, the supply authorities participated in a seminar conducted by Division. The authorities were briefed on their revised statutory obligations pursuant to the Electricity Act 1945 and Regulations. These obligations include:

obtaining approval in writing from the Coordinator of Energy Safety to construct or establish any generating plant, install or provide any additional generating plant, extend any transmission works or connect to Western Power's system

maintaining an adequate supply, in accordance with their declared system frequency and voltage, for all customers connected

establishing and maintain an effective system of inspection of consumer installations

complying with the licensing, worker safety requirements of the Electricity Act.

After further consultation, utilities were requested to submit their new

Consumer Installation Inspection for approval. This work is still progressing.

Following a death and a serious injury due to a fallen live streetlight conductor in Kalgoorlie during February 1995, the local electricity supply authority, Western Power, was ordered to conduct urgent line inspections. Further, they were required to report and carry out remedial work to ensure the safety of the public. This remedial work is still in progress.

Electrical Inspections

All Electricity Supply Authorities inspectors were certificated by the Director of Energy Safety, after appropriate checks and training where necessary. This training was carried out by the Division.

New arrangements were put into place for the submission of electrical installation compliance notices. The forms were significantly upgraded, after industry consultation.

Notices for electrical installation work are still directed to the respective offices of Western Power, or other electricity suppliers, in the usual manner. Where the installation is not supplied by or connected to an electrical supply authority (eg. station homestead, remote site, caravan), the notice must be submitted to the Division's Chief Electrical Inspector. The Division is the inspecting authority for any consumers installations not supplied by any electricity utility or supplier (eg. remote site, caravan).

Mines Inspections

Senior Electrical Inspectors were appointed to carry out electrical inspection of mines for the Department of Minerals & Energy.

These officers are located at Collie, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton and Karratha.

Electrical Shocks & Accidents

Under the provisions of the Electrical Licensing Regulations 1991 all cases of electrical shocks and accidents must be reported to the Office of Energy.

Electric shock - is defined as an incident which does not require medical or first aid treatment. During the year 273 electric shocks were reported and investigated by SECWA/Office of Energy, a decrease of 45 from last year.

Electrical accident - is defined as an incident which requires medical or first aid treatment and includes fatalities. During 1994/95, there were 48 electrical accidents, including 4 fatal electrical accidents, reported to, and investigated

by, SECWA/Office of Energy.

For the previous year SECWA recorded 48 electrical accidents including 5 fatal electrical accidents.

Western Australian Government - Energy Safety WA
All contents © 2001
Page last modified 19-Jul-2002