



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PowerNet wins national Workplace Safety Award

PowerNet, the Invercargill based electricity distribution company, this week won the annual EEA (Electricity Engineers' Association) Workplace Safety Award for its industry-leading mechanical 'Pole Grab' invention.

The prestigious award was presented on Tuesday at the annual EEA Conference in Auckland, with Joe Reti accepting it on behalf of PowerNet.

Reti, who is a field training officer, identified a safety risk to field staff when accessing failing poles, which due to their weakened state must be handled with greater care. He recognised the need for a piece of equipment that could safely manoeuvre power poles in challenging locations.

Reti and the PowerNet team designed and developed a fit-for-purpose, custom-made pole grab that would create a safer environment for field teams working with power poles. The innovative solution is a lighter-weight pole grab that allows greater safety, manoeuvrability and flexibility when removing and replacing poles.

The invention has the potential to make working with power poles significantly safer for not only PowerNet's field teams but also for others working on electricity networks throughout New Zealand, and across the world.

Reti said it was quite humbling to win an award for something that was making a lines worker's job safer. "It was about stopping poles failing when we have people up them, and how we go about doing that."

There are other similar designs, but nothing fit-for-purpose for the job at hand, he said.

Reti said the support and trust the company had shown in him and his team to deliver a solution was crucial. Throughout the process, PowerNet supported Reti with significant investment and time to innovate.

In presenting the award, the President of the Electrical Engineers' Association, Mr Bob Taylor, commented regarding our award entry, "It was a very comprehensive submission which addressed a significant PowerNet (and industry) issue of installing new poles and maintaining poles in situ. The pole grab has the potential to make working with power poles significantly safer for all field employees and contractors working in New Zealand."

PowerNet chief executive Jason Franklin said the entire PowerNet team was very proud of the award. Franklin was pleased Joe Reti was able to accept the award on behalf of the company, given his significant involvement in its development.



In addition to Joe Reti, many other people have been involved from idea inception through to the final development of the pole grab. Franklin said that this is a real, tangible example of empowering our people to implement change.

He added "This initiative has also demonstrated real commitment to PowerNet's ongoing focus on 'Safety Always' and 'Continuous Improvement' especially in relation to health and safety."

PowerNet is now actively working with an Invercargill based engineering company to commercialise the pole grab and make it available for the rest of the NZ electricity industry and potentially overseas. This will include firstly deploying the pole grab into PowerNet operations.

The prototype is made of steel and weighs 180kg. It allows field staff to hold broken poles and climb poles that have questionable integrity. It can be attached to the various booms on existing PowerNet crane trucks.

The pole grab prototype is now being trialled on the PowerNet managed electricity networks to identify potential applications and to test usability and reliability. Results to date have been very positive, Franklin said.

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