

PRESS RELEASE | Antwerp, 24 June 2020

Large-scale evacuation drill at Benelux's tallest high-voltage pylons

Mayor Bart De Wever has today been evacuated from one of the high-voltage pylons on the banks of the Scheldt in Antwerp. These pylons form the backdrop of a spectacular week-long evacuation drill organised by Brandweer Zone Antwerpen and Hulpverleningszone Waasland, the fire and emergency services of Antwerp and Waasland respectively. At 192 metres, the pylons are the tallest in the Benelux and were erected as part of Brabo, Elia's project to upgrade the high-voltage grid in and around the port of Antwerp and generally enhance Belgium's security of supply. Commissioning of the new high-voltage line is scheduled for the summer, which is why intensive training is still under way.

As part of the drill, Bart De Wever, the mayor of the City of Antwerp, was evacuated by the Brandweer Zone Antwerpen RED team. Also known as the 'climb' team, the RED team rescues people in hard-to-reach places, including at great heights or depths (e.g. on cranes or in pits) or in enclosed spaces (e.g. tanks). The Brandweer Zone Antwerpen RED team carries out around 50 rescue operations every year. The height or depth of a rescue operation does not make much difference from a technical point of view, though carrying out evacuations at such a height poses a considerable logistical challenge.

Brandweer Zone Antwerpen has previously held high-altitude drills at Antwerp Cathedral (123 metres) and the Antwerp Tower on Keyserlei (87 metres). Being able to practise on pylons almost 200 metres high is an excellent opportunity for both the RED team and Hulpverleningszone Waasland.

” *The city and port area are home to many tall structures, so it is vital that we hold regular drills and thus maintain our skills. These drills ensure that we are always completely ready to act. We would like to thank Elia for this excellent opportunity.*

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Bert Bruggemans, Commander of Brandweer Zone Antwerpen

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Such drills are a great way to prepare us for real-life incidents. Carrying out rescues on high-voltage pylons poses a different challenge to other rescues at height from a building, for example, or at depth. Being able to spend a few days calmly practising could soon make all the difference in a real situation.



Thierry Van Goethem, Director of Operations at Hulpverleningszone Waasland

Safety is our top priority

The Brabo project is a key link in the Belgian electricity grid, upgrading the grid in and around the port as well as Belgium's north-south axis (along which international electricity flows are transported). The project comprises multiple phases and will be completed in 2025.

Safety is always Elia's top priority, during construction as well as operation, so it was only too happy to work with the emergency services on this exercise.

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About the Elia Group

One of Europe's top five players

The Elia Group is active in electricity transmission. We ensure that generation and consumption are balanced around the clock, supplying 30 million end-users with electricity. With subsidiaries in Belgium (Elia) and north-east Germany (50Hertz), we operate 19,271 km of high-voltage connections. As such, our group is one of Europe's top 5. With a reliability level of 99.999%, we give society a robust power grid, which is important for socio-economic prosperity. We also aspire to be a catalyst for a successful energy transition towards a reliable, sustainable and affordable energy system.

We make the energy transition happen

By expanding international high-voltage connections and integrating ever-increasing amounts of renewable energy generation, the Elia Group promotes both the integration of the European energy market and the decarbonisation of our society. At the same time, the Elia Group is innovating its operational systems and developing market products so that new technologies and market parties can access our grid, thus making the energy transition happen.

In the interest of society

As a key player in the energy system, the Elia Group is committed to working in the interest of society. We respond to the rapidly changing energy mix, i.e. the increase in renewable energy, and constantly adapt our transmission grid. We also ensure that investments are made on time and within budget, with a maximum focus on safety. When we carry out our projects, we manage stakeholders proactively by establishing two-way communication with all affected parties very early on in the development process. We also offer our expertise to our sector and relevant authorities to build the energy system of the future.

International focus

In addition to its activities as a transmission system operator, the Elia Group provides various consulting services to international customers through its subsidiary Elia Grid International (EGI). Elia is also part of the Nemo Link consortium that has built the first subsea electrical interconnector between Belgium and the UK.

The Group operates under the legal entity Elia System Operator, a listed company whose core shareholder is the municipal holding company Publi-T.

More information: elia.be

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