

Hazelwood open cut mine fire

Community update

28 February 2014

Fires are burning in the Hazelwood open cut coal mine. They are expected to continue burning for some time. Information and support is available to help those people living and working in and around Morwell.

Temporary relocation – what's the advice?

Morwell South area

Temporary relocation away from the smoke is now recommended for people aged over 65, pre-school aged children, pregnant women and anyone with a pre-existing heart or lung condition living or working in Morwell South, south of the railway line in Commercial Road.

No serious health effects are being seen from the smoke but temporary relocation is the best way for at risk groups to reduce their exposure to the smoke.

For information and assistance call the Department of Human Services on **1800 006 468** or go to www.recovery.vic.gov.au

If you have concerns about your health, call NURSE-ON-CALL on **1300 60 60 24** or see your doctor.

Anyone experiencing severe difficulty breathing or chest pain should seek urgent medical assistance – call 000.

Long term effects

At this stage, we do not expect long term health effects from this smoke. Air quality continues to be checked.

⊗ For more information go to: www.health.vic.gov.au/hazelwood

Protecting your health

Community Health Assessment Centre

If you want to talk to a nurse or ambulance paramedic about your health please visit the Community Health Assessment Centre at Ambulance Victoria Regional Office, adjacent to the Mid Valley Shopping Centre at 2 Saskia Way, Morwell.

Pre-existing conditions

If you already have asthma or heart or lung conditions follow your treatment plan given to you by your doctor and consider relocation or keep away from the smoke as much as possible.

⊗ For information about asthma go to the Asthma Foundation of Victoria's website at www.asthma.org.au or call 1800 278 462.

When at home

- Switch your air conditioner to 'recycle' or 'recirculate' so less smoke comes into your home.
- Don't smoke, or burn candles or woodstoves.
- Sweeping or vacuuming can stir up dirt and make air-quality inside your home worse. When cleaning up ash, gently sweep and then use a wet mop to clean floors.
- Avoid vacuuming unless you have a HEPA filter vacuum cleaner.
- Soft furnishing and clothing can be aired outside if there is no or less smoke around. If airing does not work or is not possible, try cleaning items with a mixture of four litres of water, four to six teaspoons of clothes washing powder and one cup of household bleach. Rinse or wash straight away to avoid bleaching or damage.

Community Information and Recovery Centre

A Community Information and Recovery Centre has been set up in the Town Hall in Albert Street Moe. A bus, provided by Latrobe Regional Council, is also available to take people to the centre as needed. Please call 1300 367 700 for more information.

You could also take a break at the local shopping centre.

Outdoors

- Avoid outdoor exercise and try to spend as much time as you can indoors.
- If it gets less smoky, open up your house to fresh air.
- Ash should not affect your garden. Remember to wash herbs, fruit and vegetables from your garden before you eat them.

Rainwater tanks

If your tank water tastes, looks or smells unusual, do not use it for drinking or bathing for yourself or for your pets.

The town drinking water supply is safe.

Call your local council Environmental Health Officer for further advice.

⊗ Latrobe City Council: phone 1300 367 700 or go to: <http://www.latrobe.vic.gov.au/Home>

Facemasks

P2 facemasks are the only masks that help to filter smoke and are available from Community Health Assessment Centre and other outlets. Masks can be uncomfortable to wear but must fit properly and form a seal around your nose and mouth.

Further information

⊗ The following information sheets are on the Department of Health website at www.health.vic.gov.au/hazelwood

Printed copies of these information sheets are also available at the Community Health Assessment Centre in Morwell and the Community Information and Recovery Centre in Moe:

- Ash fall-out - Hazelwood open cut mine fires
- Smoke and your health - Hazelwood open cut mine fire
- Face masks - questions and answers about the smoke and ash from the Hazelwood open cut mine
- Rainwater tanks - Hazelwood open cut mine fire
- Cleaning up a smoke and ash affected home - Hazelwood open cut mine fire

Approved the Chief Health Officer.
Authorised by the Victorian Government, Melbourne.
Last updated: 2.35 2014.02.28