



Community
information



Yallourn Mine

TRUenergy's Yallourn Mine in the Latrobe Valley was flooded on June 6 after the collapse of an artificial river bank constructed to carry the Morwell River across the middle of the mine. The flooding limited the operation of Yallourn power station that generates 22 per cent of Victoria's electricity. TRUenergy applied to EPA for emergency approval to pump flood water from the mine.

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What is an Emergency Discharge Approval?

EPA was satisfied that the flooding represented a significant emergency event and granted approval for the water to be pumped into the nearby Latrobe River.

In an emergency, a company can apply to EPA for approval to discharge waste to the environment. EPA may grant its approval if the company can demonstrate that the discharge will not cause any long-term negative impacts on the environment. The company must also satisfy EPA that what they are requesting is in response to a true emergency or that significant community hardship may result if it is not granted. The specific requirements that need to be met are covered in section 30A of the Environment Protection Act, so they are sometimes referred to as a 30A approval.

How long will the discharge occur?

An emergency discharge approval can only be issued for 120 days, after this time, the company must reapply for approval to discharge.

How are the impacts being monitored?

EPA has imposed restrictions on the discharge of flood water from the open cut mine to ensure reduced environmental impacts as the water enters the Latrobe River.

The discharge approval granted to TRUenergy requires the company to monitor the impact of the discharge

on the river using an independent laboratory with a NATA accreditation (National Association of Testing Authorities) to take and test the samples. TRUenergy are required to submit monitoring results fortnightly as a requirement of the emergency discharge approval. EPA will move to sample if the results exceed allowable levels.

The Emergency Discharge Approval requires TRUenergy to test three times a week for temperature, pH, suspended and total dissolved solids, turbidity, colour and salt levels, on every sample, and additional analysis including metals and nutrients once a week at the following eight sites:

- the Latrobe River at Yallourn Power Station
- Latrobe River Upstream of discharges
- Latrobe River at Thoms Bridge Morwell River Downstream of discharges
- discharge of East Field Mine water to Latrobe River
- discharge of Township Field Mine water to Latrobe River
- fire service pond location of Township field waters to be discharged to Latrobe River
- 2km downstream from Thoms Bridge Latrobe River

and

- the power station waters are being monitored for pH, conductivity, turbidity and oil. Particle levels are assessed weekly.

Note: Hydrocarbon samples have been taken at each of the sites on one occasion.

WHAT DO THE RESULTS TELL US?

Results indicate the discharge of water from the mine has increased turbidity levels (cloudiness due to silt) in the Latrobe River. Impacts are being monitored for the river and Gippsland Lakes.

While there have been no harmful levels of other contaminants, such as heavy metals or hydrocarbon, we have seen traces of some naturally occurring compounds, such as iron, and we are undertaking further work to determine whether these are harmful to aquatic life.

Further downstream EPA has routinely monitored water quality in the Gippsland Lakes for over 20 years and as part of this regular, monthly monitoring program, will examine results for any impacts from this Emergency Discharge.

MORE INFORMATION

Contact EPA Victoria's
Pollution Hotline
1300 EPA VIC (1300 372 842).