



Hazelwood Inquiry info/DPC@DTF

30/04/2014 03:54 PM

To Hazelwood Inquiry
info/DPC@DTF

cc

bcc

Subject Morwell Mine Fire Submission

1 attachment



HAZELWOOD-COAL-MINE-FIRE-INQUIRY-SUBMISSION30042014.doc

Title: MS

First Name: GAYLE

Surname: MARGARET

Email address: [REDACTED]

Home or office phone: [REDACTED]

Content of submission (you can choose multiple): Origin and circumstances of fire, Measures taken by Hazelwood Coal Mine to prevent fire, Application and administration of regulatory regimes, Response to fire by Hazelwood Coal Mine, Response to fire by Emergency Services, Response to fire by Public Health Officials, Response to fire by Other Government Agencies, Other (please state)

If Other please state here: Too little too late acknowledgement of the emergency

Lack of community information

Impact of the fire on Mirboo North and surrounding regions

The clean up?

Upload Submission:

<http://hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/formidable/HAZELWOOD-COAL-MINE-FIRE-INQUIRY-SUBMISSION30042014.doc>

User Information

User-Agent (Browser/OS): Mozilla/5.0 (Windows NT 6.1; rv:29.0)

Gecko/20100101 Firefox/29.0

Referrer:

<http://hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au/make-a-submission/online-submissions/>

ONLINE SUBMISSION TO THE HAZELWOOD COAL MINE FIRE INQUIRY

<http://hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au/make-a-submission/online-submissions/>

from GAYLE MARGARET [REDACTED]

Wed 30th April 2014

Too little too late acknowledgement of the emergency

There was a general lack of appreciation of the impact and response required especially to support the Morwell community immediately. This is true of all levels of government and needs a co-ordinated emergency response asap in future.

Circumstances of the fire

On the day of the fire our community group Coal & CSG Free Mirboo North had organised an event in Baromi Park. It was attended by about 250 people from all over Gippsland, Melbourne etc. Despite having informed the police and the CFA of our event, no information about the fire came through to our organisers. As such, many participants came across roadblocks and detours on their way home.

Lack of community information

During the fire, the extent of the fire was not conveyed to our event organisers or to the Mirboo North community generally, even tho' the fire came close (within 10kms) to town as we realised later in the following weeks.

Impact of the fire on Mirboo North and surrounding regions

During the period of the fire Mirboo North and other surrounding towns I expect, were impacted by very high air pollution. The air was obviously heavily contaminated by smoke and chemicals that we could smell and taste and that caused eye irritations, upset daily life etc.

We would like some EPA air quality testing equipment placed in Mirboo North and the long term health impact study to include all surrounding regions of Morwell.

The clean up?

What a misnomer! Handing people vaccum cleaners is completely inadequate and inappropriate. Of all responses this demonstrates the Victorian Government's total lack of understanding of the impact of this fire on the people of Morwell and surrounds and the likely future impacts of contaminated coal dust and smoke.

Response by the CFA & SES

I would like to congratulate the CFA and SES for their prompt and excellent response to this fire and to wish those who were injured a speedy and complete recovery. I would also like to raise the following concerns for all these service men and women:

- a. Adequate Volunteer insurance
- b. Adquate OH&S standards & equipment
- c. Onus for GDF Suez's irresponsibility

Response by Hazelwood Coal Mine to fire & Measures taken by Hazelwood Coal Mine to prevent fire

Obviously GDF Suez has ignored its responsibilities to properly close off and rehabilitate areas. We now have 2 underground fires that continue to burn even now. It is clear that GDF Suez had not:

- i. properly sealed off the unused mine to prevent another underground fire.

- ii. kept installed sprinklers and fire management systems in place (including staffing and water supplies) and maintained to standards prior to privatisation.

When & How will these underground fires be extinguished as an urgent priority for the region?

Why is fire prevention and management NOT a critical responsibility of GDF Suez? and How can the public, the CFA & SES be compensated for picking up this responsibility in the public interest?

Lack of presence and comment by GDF Suez shows a complete lack of responsibility, concern and commitment to their economic, social and environmental responsibilities.

Application and administration of regulatory regimes

Obviously, the regulatory authorities and their powers of enforcement are NOT strong enough to ensure that:

Public health and safety comes first. People should have been advised to leave as early as possible and as a precaution given the nature of the emergency.

Public information is timely, adequate and complete

Large scale, co-ordinated community evacuations can occur in a crisis

Coal Mining Companies fulfil their legal obligations and meet community expectations

Criminal charges can be laid against GDF Suez if this inquiry finds they've been negligent

Response to fire by Public Health Officials

I am happy to hear that there will be a long term health study. Public Health Officials need to be included equally into the Emergency Response decisions and advisements. It is not satisfactory for EPA to be advising on 'air quality' and the Health officials talking about the presence of carcinogens in the air that are a real risk to health. This type of conflicting information causes more stress and indecision within the community.

Response to fire by Other Government Agencies

Reassurances by MPs are unsatisfactory. Communities need timely, adequate and complete information from Public Health, EPA, CFA & SES authorities and an advisement of health and air quality risks to 'Leave as early as possible' as per the bushfire scale. It is also unsatisfactory to have piecemeal responses eg. children being bussed to schools further away, DSS handing out money to enable people to travel out of the area very late in the crisis, provision of vacuum cleaners. Much more work needs to be done on a co-ordinated response to large scale crises. This must include local community groups and local councils.