

Gippsland Regional Respite and Relief Plan

Latrobe Valley Coal Mine Fires Incident

Version: 1.3 - 23 February 2014

Current for period 20 February to 6 March 2014

1. Purpose

To provide an outline of the Gippsland regional level relief coordination and management to ensure essential needs are provided to individuals and communities affected by the Latrobe Valley Coal Mine fires.

This plan should be read in conjunction with:

1. Latrobe Valley Coal Mine Fires Strategic Risk and Consequence Plan
2. Latrobe Valley Coal Mines Fires Operational Evacuation Plan
3. Latrobe Valley Coal Mines Fires-Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy
4. Municipal Emergency Management Plans
5. State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan (Emergency Management Manual Victoria – Part 4)
6. Emergency Relief Handbook: A Planning Guide

2. Emergency Relief Functions

Emergency relief is the provision and coordination of essential needs to persons affected by, or involved in the management of, an emergency.

The functions of emergency relief meet the needs of affected people for:

- food and water
- immediate non-food items
- emergency shelter
- reconnection with family and friends through – Register.Find.Reunite (RFR)
- first aid and primary care
- psychosocial support
- financial assistance
- emergency relief for animals

- sanitation and hygiene
- information

Relief services can be provided in a number of ways. Methods for the delivery of relief services include:

- Re-supply
- Outreach
- Established supply points
- Information points
- Emergency Relief Centres

3. Emergency Relief Activation

The Regional Controller for the Latrobe Valley Coal Mine Fires will determine the actions required to address increased levels of carbon monoxide in affected communities. This may include shelter in place and individual relocation advice or in the most extreme circumstances, a recommendation to evacuate. The Regional Controller will determine the need to activate emergency relief services.

Communications

During an emergency, the response agency is responsible for coordinating community information and engagement, which will include information to the community regarding the activation of emergency respite and relief centres and general support services available to the community. Such information is integrated within emergency warnings.

The Latrobe Valley Coal Mine Fires Communications and Stakeholders Engagement Strategy outlines key strategies for the two week period commencing 17 February. The strategic intent is:

- Maintain trust and good-will by keeping the Latrobe Valley and wider Gippsland community informed regarding the open cut mine fires by providing timely, tailored and relevant information about those fires.
- Assist and support other agencies to communicate their information (Health, EPA, Local Council).

The strategic intent will be achieved by committing to regular communication and stakeholder engagement (including mainstream channels but with a strong focus on face-to-face engagement) and by having a clear channel for information.

Health and Human Services Emergency Management coordinate relief information at a state and regional level through mechanisms such as Victorian Emergency Relief Information Line and the whole-of-Victorian government Emergency Relief and Recovery Victoria website.

For this event information is being made available to the public through:

- Daily media release with updated information by Incident Control public information cell
- Community Respite Centre located in Moe has information on fire management, public health messages and social support messages as provided by key relief partner agencies located at the Respite Centre
- Promotion of websites with relevant information on fire conditions, air quality, public health messages etc
- Information Bus based in Morwell for community to access information on health and fire suppression
- Community engagement teams attending pre advertised locations in Morwell and surrounding towns to provide information and answer questions
- Letter drop of community newsletter
- Letters to parents of children attending Morwell schools or pre-schools

4. Current situation

This respite and relief plan is focused on the Latrobe Valley Coal Mine Fires incident. The Hazelwood open cut mine has an active fire involving over 200 CFA and MFB firefighters, 100 mine staff, 30 incident management team personnel, and nine medical monitoring personnel. Fire suppression is the primary goal. While progress has been made to extinguish the fire, there is still at least two or more weeks of work ahead. Monitoring of carbon monoxide is being undertaken around the clock both at the mine site and in the Morwell community by Emergency Services HazMat technicians. The EPA also has air monitoring in place for fine particles in Traralgon and in Morwell to measure the impacts of the smoke (from bushfires and from the mine fires) on local air quality. Emergency services and EPA will continue monitoring over coming weeks to minimise any risks to communities

Air quality forecasts are available on the EPA website. Conditions change regularly. Smoky conditions are expected to continue in parts of the Latrobe Valley for at least the remainder of this week and up to 4 weeks. The wind and weather will determine the areas to be effected. High levels of smoke can aggravate existing heart or lung conditions and cause irritated eyes, coughing or wheezing.

Due to the on going nature of the fires, some individuals and communities may experience smoke impacts and may seek to relocate during periods of poor air quality. This relief plan is based on an assumption that there may be periods of short duration- two hour periods, where EPA issues advice that people who are vulnerable or have pre existing respiratory conditions should consider temporarily relocating to reduce their exposure to poor air quality.

Key issues being addressed as part of coordinated regional relief planning include:

- integration of relief into response operations including evacuation planning
- surge planning at the local council and regional level
- relocation support for vulnerable people

5. Community Respite Centre Planning

Community Impact and Needs Assessment

The community impacts are assessed through the information available through the Incident Controller. The impacts identified include poor quality air and ash that can cause temporary respiratory and skin irritation. Ash accumulation also has an impact leading to ongoing and regular cleaning.

Needs Assessment is undertaken through monitoring feedback from community liaison teams, monitoring of social media sites, feedback at the health assessment centre and respite centre.

Current needs that have been identified includes regular and ongoing updated information regarding the health impacts of the smoke and ash, progress in suppressing the fire. Health messaging includes advising people to stay indoors and take regular breaks away from the smoke during very poor air quality days.

To address these impacts and needs the following has been actioned.

A Health assessment centre has been established by the Dept of Health and operated by Ambulance Victoria. The health assessment centre is located at the AV centre in Morwell and is open to the public for a health check and access to health information.

Due to the prolonged forecast of poor air quality a community respite centre has been opened in Moe for residents of Morwell and surrounding areas to attend to take a break from the smoky conditions.

The respite centre is being coordinated currently by DHS in conjunction with Latrobe City Council.

The centre is operating inside the Moe Town Hall, Albert Street, Moe from 9am – 7pm daily, subject to local demand.

Respite Hardship Financial Assistance. People who want to temporarily relocate and are experiencing financial hardship to achieve this can be referred to the Department of Human Services to determine eligibility for respite financial assistance. Limited funds are available on a means tested basis to support temporary relocation.

Transportation to the Respite Centre . Free car parking is available on the street outside the Respite Centre with longer term car parking available in the public car park directly across from the Respite Centre. Public transportation is also available through the Latrobe Valley bus line which has a stop at the front door to the Respite Centre and VLine Moe station is a short walk. For people who have no means to access public transport or who have a mobility disability, free taxi transport is available. Provision has been made to cover taxi transport to the respite centre. Taxi vouchers are available at the relief centres to cover the transport costs..

Vulnerable Persons List. There are 9 residents listed in Morwell on the vulnerable persons list who have been contacted by the Latrobe Council MERO and MERC to ensure they have current information on how to respond to smoke conditions and ash.

Representatives from the following organisations are supporting the Respite Centre:

Organisation	Role
Latrobe City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing venue • Staff at venue to attend to community questions • Qualified staff at venue to provide Child Friendly space • Catering for Centre staff and volunteers • Taxi vouchers for people who need to use specialist taxi services due to physical disabilities
Victorian Red Cross	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Aid • Tea/coffee for community members
Victorian Council of Churches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet and greet people as they arrive • Personal support
Ambulance Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide public health messages regarding impacts of smoke and ash • Health support
Environmental Protection Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information on how air quality is measured and general questions about air quality monitoring
Victoria Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public safety • Traffic management should it be required
Fire Services Representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on fire suppression activities
Department of Human Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and referral for health and psychosocial related matters. • Provide centre coordination

6. Regional Emergency Relief Coordination

Municipal councils have responsibility for coordinating emergency relief at the local level. The Department of Human Services (DHS) is responsible for the overall emergency relief coordination at the regional and state levels. Red Cross supports DHS in emergency relief coordination.

A coordinated approach to the management of resources and operations is critical to ensure the effective use of limited resources required during an emergency and to ensure regional operations are managed consistent with emergency management guidelines. The primary method for regional coordination of resources and operations during an emergency is via the Regional Emergency Operations Centre.

Where an emergency is likely to exceed the capacity of a municipal council to coordinate emergency relief functions, DHS, supported by Red Cross, assumes responsibility for the coordination of relief resources. Similarly, where local arrangements for relief service delivery are exceeded, service delivery falls to lead agencies designated in the Emergency Management Manual Victoria to further expand the capacity of local relief services. Further escalations to the state level of management may also be necessary for very large or complex events. The following table identifies the organisations designated as having lead responsibility for the delivery of emergency relief services where local arrangements have been exceeded.

Table 1: Lead agencies for emergency relief functions

Emergency relief function	Organisation with lead responsibility
Regional/state coordinator	Department of Human Services
Emergency relief planning and functional management at municipal level	Municipal councils
Food and water	Red Cross
Non-food items	The Salvation Army
Emergency shelter	Municipal councils
Provision of emergency relief centres	Municipal councils
Registration (Register.Find.Reunite)	Managed by Red Cross on behalf of Victoria Police
First aid and primary care	Ambulance Victoria
Psychosocial Support	Department of Human Services
Financial Assistance	Department of Human Services
Emergency relief for animals	Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI)
Food supply manufacturing and logistics	DEPI
Sanitation and hygiene	Municipal councils
Provision of information	All agencies

When requesting emergency relief, agencies should be familiar with the following arrangements for meeting the costs of providing emergency relief services:

- Municipal councils are responsible for meeting the cost of emergency relief measures provided to people affected by an emergency.
- If emergency relief is requested by a response or relief agency for its own personnel, that agency will be responsible for costs incurred.
- When a response agency requests emergency relief (such as catering) on behalf of a number of response agencies, the requesting agency will be responsible for costs incurred.

These arrangements apply regardless of whether emergency relief is coordinated at municipal, regional or state level. Municipal councils should contact the Department of Treasury and Finance to ascertain availability of reimbursement of relief costs under the National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements.

7. Relief Agency Preparedness

Red Cross supports the Department of Human Services in the coordination of relief services. The State Emergency Response Officer (VicPol) upon advice from the Incident Controller, is responsible for liaising with Red Cross to activate the State Inquiry Centre and the Register.Find.Reunite portal (www.redcross.org.au) as needed.

- To obtain Red Cross assistance contact 1800 232 969.
- To activate personal support from the Victorian Council of Churches (VCC) call 9650 4511.
- To activate The Salvation Army relief services contact Luke Roberts on 0419 535 166.

7. Animal Welfare

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) has the coordinating role and responsibility under the Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan to ensure the welfare of all animals is attended to in emergencies. To ensure this occurs, DEPI currently has:

- staff on stand-by across the state to respond to animal welfare and agricultural impact assessment (if required), and is actively monitoring the fire situation and in liaison with fire control agencies.
- additional staff capacity available should that be required.
- worked with municipalities to ensure they have contingencies in their emergency relief centre plans to deal with evacuated animals (both healthy and injured).
- provided media messaging about the responsibilities for, and care of, animals in fire emergencies.
- fire recovery arrangements to oversee the care of injured wildlife, and
- developed networks with animal care agencies and personnel to assist in larger emergency responses (such as veterinarians, animal aid organisations and the Victorian Farmers Federation).

Where community members seek to relocate with their pets the Municipal council will coordinate through their local laws officers support and information.

8. Municipal Emergency Relief Arrangements

Municipal councils have responsibility for coordinating emergency relief at the local level. The emergency relief functions and the nominated agencies responsible for service provision at the local level are designated in the Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP).

Table 2 summarises municipal emergency relief arrangements for municipalities in Gippsland.

Summary of Municipal Emergency Relief Arrangements in Gippsland

Table 2: Municipal emergency relief arrangements documented in municipal emergency management plans within Gippsland

COUNCIL	Food & water	Material aid	Emergency shelter	Relief centres	Register.Find. Reunite	First aid/ primary care	Psychosocial support	Financial assistance	Animal welfare	Sanitation & hygiene
Wellington	Red Cross	Salvation Army	Council	Council	Red Cross	St John's Ambulance	VCC Lifeline Gippsland	Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund (GERF) DHS	Council	Municipal Environmental Health Officer (EHO)
Latrobe	Red Cross	Salvation Army	Council	Council	Red Cross	St John's Ambulance	Lifeline Gippsland	GERF DHS	Council	Municipal EHO
Baw Baw	Red Cross	Salvation Army	Council	Council	Red Cross	St John's Ambulance	Council	GERF DHS	Council	Municipal EHO
East Gippsland	Red Cross	Salvation Army	Council	Council	Red Cross	Red Cross	VCC Red Cross	GERF DHS	Victorian Animal Aid Trust	Municipal Manager Health & Medical Officer of Health
South Gippsland	Red Cross	Salvation Army	Council	Council	Red Cross	St John's Ambulance	Red Cross/VCC	GERF DHS	Council	Municipal EHO
Bass Coast	Red Cross	Salvation Army	Council	Council	Red Cross	St Johns Ambulance	Red Cross/VCC	GERF DHS	Council	Municipal EHO

9. Emergency Relief Centre and Accommodation Capacity Planning

Based on the evacuation plans and possible consequences, relief capacity planning is being completed at 3 levels:

1. local level (council managing their own needs)
2. regional level (councils seek support from other Gippsland councils)
3. state level support required (support provided externally into Gippsland)

Table 3 provides a summary of relief centre preparedness and capacity for the current bushfire situation in Gippsland. No relief centres are currently open for the LV Coal Fire Incident. Although councils are able to draw on regional resources where more resources are required, this is only possible if councils remain unaffected and have available capacity.

Relief centres can be used to provide accommodation, however municipalities often take a pragmatic approach to meet the accommodation needs of displaced community members. In some situations, accommodation may be sourced from local commercial providers, particularly where numbers are small. This approach allows, for example, a relief centre to be closed overnight and staffing to rostered and rotated in a more economical way. Should larger numbers of people present to relief centres, or where private accommodation is limited, relief centres would be more heavily relied upon for accommodation.

Municipal councils within Gippsland are all signatories to the Protocol for Inter-council Emergency Management Resource Sharing and utilise the Gippsland Emergency Relief Centre Standard Operating Procedures to provide a standard approach to setting up and operating emergency relief centres. Details of emergency relief centre locations are found in Appendix 1 of that document.

Immediate Accommodation Plans

Latrobe City Council will initially open 2 relief centres if requested to support the relocation of community members. The first relief centres to be opened would be the Moe Town Hall and Traralgon Town Hall - these two have a sleep over capacity of 280 with greater capacity for people who do not need to sleep over. Salvation Army have capacity to supply these two relief centres with necessary bedding.

If it is clear from the outset that greater capacity is needed or if these two relief centres reach capacity the Trafalgar High School, and the Trafalgar Community Centre (both operated by Baw Baw Shire Council) would be the next two relief centres that could open up quickly. The Salvation Army have sufficient bedding to supply these four centres should they be required. Anything beyond this will require Salvation Army to source additional supplies from other locations.

Local motel style accommodation is currently fully booked by emergency services staff. The Federation University in Churchill which has student accommodation is also fully booked by emergency services. There is no plans to open a relief centre in Morwell for safety reasons. Motels will be used should capacity become available.

Overall for immediate planning purposes there is relief accommodation capacity available for **760**. Beyond that the council will require support from councils further away, regional support and possibly the State.

If all 4 relief centres are activated DHS would deploy a Relief Centre support staff person at each centre to assist in coordinating information and reporting requirements.

Table 3: Emergency Relief Centres and supplementary accommodation capacity – Latrobe Valley Mine Fires 2014.

A. Municipal Council	B. Location of relief centre	C. Beds available at relief centre	D. Time frames for Bedding
Baw Baw	Trafalgar High School 70 School Road, Trafalgar Trafalgar Community Centre 105 Princes Hwy	Sleeps 200 on floor of Hall Sleeps 80-100 more if not sleeping over Sleeping on mattresses on hall floor	Salvation Army to provide bedding-Linen & Mattresses and can organise within 30 minutes to 1 hour Salvation Army to provide bedding-Linen & Mattresses and can organise within 30 minutes to 1 hour
Latrobe	Moe Town Hall, Cnr Albert Street and Skeltons Lane, Moe Traralgon Town Hall, (known as the Little Theatre) Cnr Grey Street and Breed Street Traralgon Moe Place (Basketball centre) Vale Street Ted Summerton Reserve	Sleeps 200, capacity greater if not sleeping. Sleeps 80 Theatre has seating capacity for 300 Sleep capacity 200+	Salvation Army to provide bedding-Linen & Mattresses and can organise within 30 minutes to 1 hour Salvation Army provide bedding-linen& mattresses and can organise within 30 minutes to 1 hour
South Gippsland	Mirboo North	Sleeps 200	Need to confirm availability of bedding

10. Emergency Relief Services Capacity and Capability Planning

Table 4 below outlines capacity and capability planning at the local and regional level and identifies agencies providing relief services. It includes relief services provided at all locations including Emergency Relief Centres and re-supply of isolated communities.

Note: Given the current situation only Latrobe City Council, Baw Baw Shire Council and South Gippsland Shire Council's capacity **within 2 hours** is provided, however additional councils may be called upon to assist in managing larger scale relief over a longer timeframe. Cardinia Shire Council and Yarra Ranges Shire Council have made contact with Latrobe to indicate they are able to assist.

Table 4. Relief Services Capacity Planning**LATROBE CITY COUNCIL**

Relief service type	Capacity and capability planning
Food and water	<p>Red Cross - Red Cross is currently winding down Food & Water operations at Hazelwood mine (transition expected to be complete by Saturday 22/02/2014). Red Cross therefore can currently assist with basic Food & Water (as per current arrangements at Moe Community Respite Centre) and in the coming days capacity will be there to coordinate Food & Water on a larger scale.</p> <p>Foodbank Victoria is on standby to support Red Cross if required, however it unlikely that the current scenario would warrant this support because isolated communities will not be created, and local supply is unlikely to be compromised.</p> <p>Red Cross has good partnerships in the area with local businesses and organisations such as Salvation Army and Lions who are able to assist with provision of Food & Water at a relief centre if required.</p> <p>Red Cross - Can supply teams of 2 within approximately one hour. Capacity Good</p>
Psychosocial support	<p>Victorian Council of Churches: Can immediately deploy an initial team of 2 (within 30-45 minutes) when relief centres open up (based on 2 relief centres) and increase team size to 4 as needed fairly quickly. They have further capacity to help with greater than 2 relief centres if needed but this may reduce the overall team size at each centre Capacity – Good</p> <p>VCC will be primary support provider. Red Cross is also available to provide support as needed. All emergency services volunteers are personal support trained.</p>
Support for Children	<p>Latrobe City Council through the pre school program can open up child friendly space in and or near both relief centres and supervise these as needed.</p>
Non food items	<p>The Salvation Army, Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul, Service Clubs</p> <p>The Salvation Army has emergency bedding and hygiene packs for 500 in Morwell.</p> <p>Red Cross – have some provision to assist with hygiene packs if required.</p>
Registration	<p>Red Cross- Can supply teams of 4-6 within an hour.</p> <p>If there is a request to activate the State Inquiry Centre and the Register.Find.Reunite portal (www.redcross.org.au) outside of business hours this may take 1-2 hours to scale up these resources.</p> <p>During business hours this can be achieved within the hour. Capacity Good</p>
First aid/primary care	<p>Red Cross and St John - are currently assisting emergency response and can be redeployed to assist in relief.</p> <p>Capacity - Good but might be reduced to nil capacity if any health services need help with relocations/evacuations.</p>

	Red Cross – currently assisting at the Moe Community Respite Centre. Good capacity in the surrounding area and able to have teams of at least 2 to relief centres within 1-2 hours.
Financial assistance	Department of Human Services - Personal Hardship Assistance Program will be activated if centrally authorised. DHS to ensure adequate supply of Personal Information Forms at each relief centre - confirmed there are high volumes of these forms in Traralgon office
Animal welfare	Latrobe City Council, through their local laws officers will coordinate relief centre management of people arriving with pets. Possible use of boarding kennels at Traralgon East.
Sanitation and hygiene	Council Environmental Health Officers available. The Salvation Army has 'Comfort Packs' with basic toiletries available for distribution at relief centres. Each of the relief centres has amenities which can be increased as needed. Capacity good
Management and coordination	Latrobe City Council have established a roster to ensure they could operate 2 relief centres concurrently with minimum of 2 staff per relief centre as well as staffing the Municipal Emergency Co-ordination Centre support, ICC EMLO. Baw Baw Shire Council indicates they will prepare a roster to support relief centre management of 2 relief centres. South Gippsland Shire Council indicates they can support relief centre management for 1 centre. Capacity Good
Safety	VicPol to deploy police to assist with maintaining safe environment and help defuse any incidents that may arise. Availability confirmed.
Additional Supports	Telstra to supply phone/internet supply if required Headspace- program for youth