

Appendix 5

Hazelwood Mine Fire Health Recovery Sub-Plan

(For inclusion in the Hazelwood Mine Fire Recovery Plan)

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Date	17 March 2014
Review	

Approved by:

State Health Coordinator

Regional Health Coordinator

Regional Recovery Coordinator

Date:

XX/XX/XX

Distribution:

Health Recovery sub committee

Hazelwood Mine Fire Recovery Committee

2014 State Recovery Coordination Team (via State Recovery Coordinator)

1. Background

Hazelwood Mine Fire Recovery Committee requires a health recovery Plan.

Purpose

This plan is to:

- Support the health-related needs of the community.
- Provide health risk management advice to the public, health professionals and government.
- Maintain health sector capacity and capability to respond.

2. Overview

Context

The Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire in the Latrobe Valley, which commenced on 09 February 2014, was deemed controlled by the Fire Services Commissioner at 1100hrs on Monday 10 March 2014. Fire services will remain in control of the incident until 18 March 2014 when it is likely to formally transition to recovery. Air quality continues to be monitored by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and locally based meteorological stations continue to be used to predict periods of smoke impact on the community.

The Chief Health Officer (CHO) issued advice for sensitive groups to relocate from the southern part of Morwell on 28 February 2014 due to sustained poor air quality and advice from the Fire Services Commissioner that the coal mine fire would continue for at least another 10 days. The basis for a recommendation by the CHO to lift the temporary relocation advice, for reasons of health protection, includes the analysis of data and criteria provided by the EPA, Bureau of Meteorology and information from the State Controller as to the fire suppression status.

The CHO will advise the State Emergency Management Team (SEMT) the, State Crisis and Resilience Council (SCRC), the Fire Commissioner and the Chief Commissioner of Police when the temporary relocation advice should be lifted. Once all the criteria have been met, the CHO will issue an advisory that the conditions are now safe for sensitive groups to return. This will also be subject to ongoing monitoring and review while fire continues to persist.

This plan documents the arrangements established by the Department of Health (Department) in its role as a Support Agency under the Emergency Management Manual for Victoria. A number of the strategies that commenced during the response phase of this incident will continue into the recovery phase. The Health recovery sub-plan will outline the arrangements for transition to normal business for the health system.

Key Considerations

- The Department has undertaken health risk assessments of the smoke impacts on the community. Long term health effects from air pollution usually occur after several years or a lifetime of exposure. The smoke from these fires has affected local air quality for a number of weeks, rather than years, therefore long-term health effects are not expected.
- A long term health study to monitor the health of the community is being considered.

Priorities

- Support the health-related needs of the community
- Maintain health sector capacity and capability to respond in the short term and ensure an appropriate transition of the health care response to this incident back to normal business.
- Provide health risk management advice to the public, health professionals and government throughout the recovery process.

3. Leadership and Coordination

The Department of Health will coordinate health recovery planning with the health sector. The Department will establish a sub-group consisting of the Department, Ambulance Victoria, the Gippsland Medicare Local, Latrobe Community Health Service and Latrobe Regional Hospital to provide advice and guidance in the implementation of this sub-plan. A secretariat will be established to support the Chair and the sub-committees operations.

The Hazelwood Mine Fire Recovery Committee is responsible for leading activities with oversight of implementation guided by the Department of Human Services.

The Department of Health and Ambulance Victoria will undertake local operational activities related to the implementation of this plan.

The Department of Health will support other areas such as psychosocial recovery through participation and advice through the Social and Community Sub-committee. The Department will also seek to facilitate the participation of health care providers and organisations as appropriate.

4. Current Activities

The Department has commenced the following activities/programs to support local residents as outlined in the Health Incident Action Plan (v4):

Strategic objective 1: Provide health risk management advice to the public, health professionals and government.

Strategy 1a: Provide Department Expertise to the Community Information and Recovery Centre in Morwell

To deliver this strategy, the Department will:

- Ensure risk communications materials are available at the centre.
- Ensure the Department is represented, through Ambulance Victoria, in order to respond to concerns and to provide referral for a health assessment.

Strategy 1b: Provide public health risk communications materials online and directly to the public

To deliver this strategy, the Department will:

- Collaborate within the Emergency Management Joint Public Information Committee (EMJPIC) and the Regional EMJPIC.
- Collaborate with the Community Engagement & Information Team on the implementation of Latrobe Valley Communications & Engagement Strategy.
- Provide paid advertising as required.
- Maintain factsheets online via: www.health.vic.gov.au/hazelwood .
- Maintain online vodcast and other resources updated as required covering a range of smoke and health related topics.
- Maintain an internal frequently asked questions resource to inform answers to questions from the public when asked, updated as needed.
- Attend public meetings as requested and maintain a visible presence in the community.

- The Department of Health has developed advice regarding private drinking water supplies, water tanks, cleaning of water tanks and general cleaning guidance.

Strategy 1c: Provide Chief Health Officer Alerts/Advisories and media inputs in a timely manner

To deliver this strategy, the Department will:

- Publish an up-to-date Chief Health Officer advisory providing advice to health professionals and the public regarding smoke, ash and carbon monoxide in relation to the incident.
- Provide media releases and interviews as required.
- Provide advice to the community and government when the temporary relocation advice should be lifted, from a public health perspective.

Strategy 1d: Provide health advice to the State Clean-up Planning Committee.

To deliver this strategy, the Department will:

- Be represented on the State Clean-up Planning Committee¹.
- Provide health advice as required in relation to clean up strategies.
- Public communication is coordinated through regional level and state level EMJPIC².

Strategy 1e: Provide health advice and input into the State Recovery Plan.

To deliver this strategy, the Department will:

- Be represented on regional and state recovery planning committees.
- Provide health advice as required in relation to recovery strategies.

Strategic objective 2: Support the health-related needs of the community

Strategy 2a: Undertake community engagement activities to assess and respond to community need relating to health concerns, health issues and health service provision

To deliver this strategy, the Department will:

- Continue to support the CFA community information program through Ambulance Victoria.
- Support the community engagement function at the regional level, through the provision of written health advice materials to the Community Engagement and Information functional units within the Regional Control Centre (RCC).

Strategic objective 3: Maintain health sector capacity and capability to respond

Strategy 3a: Establish a Community Health Assessment Centre in Morwell from 21 February 2014

To deliver this strategy, the Department will:

- Resource a short term triage/assessment capacity in Morwell known as a Community Health Assessment Centre (CHAC) through Ambulance Victoria.
- The centre opened on 21 February 2014 and will continue operating until at least 30 March 2014.
- Management of the facility is through Ambulance Victoria and is staffed by paramedics and nurses.
- Nursing staff sourced from Latrobe Regional Health, Latrobe Community Health, and other health services as required.
- Focus to be on initial assessment, not definitive medical treatment.
- Equipment to include carboxy-haemoglobin monitors.
- P2 masks will be available for the community upon request.
- Public health risk communications materials to be documented in a communications plan.
- Public Transport Victoria has set up a temporary bus stop to ensure public access is maximised.
- To work to community presenter clinical management protocols around carbon monoxide testing, which are distinct from mine responder protocols (see FSC Health Management and Decontamination Plan),
- Incorporate monitoring of service usage.
- Undertake data collection and analysis.

¹ The committee has been established to examine the concept of 'cleaning up' during, and post, the Hazelwood mine fire. This will include ongoing discussion of strategic and high level operational matters to be considered around clean-up.

² The Department of Premier and Cabinet has a coordinating role for public communications at the state level.

Strategy 3b: Monitor the demand on the health sector related to smoke impacts

To deliver this strategy, the Department will:

- Monitor the demand in particular relating to presentations at Latrobe Regional Hospital and the demand on General Practice, Ambulance Victoria and Nurse On Call.
- The Regional Health IMT will liaise with Latrobe Regional Hospital.
- Gippsland Medicare Local to liaise with local general practices with data reported to Health Command.
- Nurse-on-Call activity will be reported through Acting Manager Service Capital Planning.
- Ambulance Victoria activity will be reported through Health Command.

Strategic objective 4: Provide health risk assessment and management advice to the Regional Controller of Latrobe Valley Coal Mine Fire/Hazmat**Strategy 4a: Assess public health risk arising from air quality**

To deliver this strategy, the Department will:

- Receive air quality data from EPA Victoria on a daily basis and Bureau of Meteorology wind predictions, including data on visibility, carbon monoxide and particulate matter.
- The Department will provide consideration of the potential health impacts based on the results of environmental sampling from EPA.
- Review air quality data since the beginning of the incident.
- Assess air quality data using the *Bushfire Smoke, Air Quality and Health protocol* and *PM2.5 protocol* agreed between EPA Victoria and the Department in order to provide public information and health advice that is matched to the degree of deterioration in air quality.
- Assess community carbon monoxide exposures using the *Department of Health Carbon Monoxide Response Protocol* to determine the CHO recommendations for health advice to the Regional Controller and the REMT.
- Assess ash content and update communications accordingly.
- Respond to other specific public health concerns at the request of the CHO.

Timeframes**Estimated costs**

Further analysis is required to estimate costs.

The estimated costs for delivering these activities/programs is \$.....

Funding will be sourced from XXX

5. Post-fire Health recovery

In addition to the activities outlined above that need to continue into the post-fire recovery phase, the following will be undertaken.

Strategic objective 1: Provide health risk management advice to the public, health professionals and government.**Strategy 1b: Provide public health risk communications materials online and directly to the public**

To deliver this strategy, the Department will:

- Collaborate with the Community Engagement and Communications sub-committee of the Regional Recovery Committee and continue to be represented on and coordinate activities through State level EMJPIC

Strategy 1f: Assess public health risk arising from air quality

To deliver this strategy, the Department will:

- Collaborate with the EPA in relation to longer term environmental monitoring and sampling requirements to inform health risk assessment activities.
- The Department will provide consideration of the potential health impacts based on the results of environmental sampling from EPA.

Strategic objective 2: Support the health-related needs of the community**Strategy 2a: Undertake community engagement activities to assess and respond to community need relating to health concerns, health issues and health service provision**

To deliver this strategy, the Department will:

- Collaborate with the Community Engagement and Communications sub-committee of the Regional Recovery Committee
- Facilitate health service provider participation and engagement into the activities of the Community Engagement and Communications recovery sub-committee

Consideration is being given to the needs of a health study focussed on the community.

Strategic objective 3: Maintain health sector capacity and capability to respond**Strategy 3a: Operate a Community Health Assessment Centre in Morwell until at least 30 March 2014**

To deliver this strategy, the Department will:

- Review the ongoing need for this service and develop a planned closure strategy including promoting alternative primary health care services.

Strategy 3b: Monitor the demand on the health sector related to smoke impacts

To deliver this strategy, the Department will:

- Cease additional monitoring of health sector demand once there is a sustained improvement in air quality in Morwell.

Strategy 3c: Support the return of Baptistcare St Hillary's Community residents to the Morwell facility

To deliver this strategy:

- Ambulance Victoria in collaboration with the Department and Baptistcare St Hillary's management, will support the transport of residents from facilities in Drouin and Traralgon facilities back to the Morwell facility once the temporary relocation advice is lifted and the facility has been cleaned.

Operation/Implementation***Timeframes******Estimated costs***

Further analysis is required to estimate costs.

The estimated costs for delivering these activities/programs is \$.....

Funding will be sourced from XXX

6. Communications

The Department of Human Services and Latrobe City Council will coordinate communications and public messaging through the communications and community engagement sub-committee and sub-plan. To ensure continuity with communications and provide a consistent and accurate message, information about the Health recovery activities will be communicated through channels already established. Communication pathways include:

- The Department of Human Services Recovery website
- Department of Health website: www.health.vic.gov.au/hazelwood
- Local government
- Existing forums such as the Emergency Management Joint Public Information Committee.

7. Reporting and Monitoring

Lead agencies responsible for delivery of recovery activities will provide progress reports to the sub-committee. The Chair of the Health Recovery sub-committee will report progress against the sub-plan to the Regional Recovery Committee.

WORKING DRAFT

