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Rainwater tanks – Hazelwood open cut mine fire

Community information

March 2014

This information has been developed by the Department of Health in response to community questions and concerns about smoke and ash fall-out from the Hazelwood open cut mine fire.

Local air quality in the Latrobe Valley has been impacted by smoke and ash from the Hazelwood open cut mine fire.

If you live in a smoke-affected area you should be aware that your water tank could become contaminated from ash. If the water tastes, looks or smells unusual do not drink it or give it to animals.

The town drinking water supply is safe.

How can I prevent my water tank from becoming contaminated?

The most effective way to prevent contamination of your water tank is to ensure that your tank is properly sealed and that you disconnect the down pipes while your house is affected by smoke and ash.

What if it rains before I can disconnect the down pipes?

- Water testing is not necessary as contamination is usually obvious. If your water has changed in taste, colour or smell, then it should not be used for drinking or food preparation.
- Water that is not suitable for drinking can still be used on the garden.

When can I start using my rainwater tank again for drinking water purposes?

If the water in your tank has not been contaminated the water should be safe to use. However, do not reconnect your down pipes until your roof has been cleaned.

- If the water tastes, smells, or looks unusual you should use an alternate supply for drinking.
- You should only clean the ash from your roof and gutters when it is safe to do so.
- It should not be necessary to clean your tank after a fire, unless it is grossly polluted. If you wish to clean your tank it is recommended you engage a specialist contractor, as working in a confined space is dangerous.

For further information

Local water cartage or tank cleaners - contact the Environmental Health section of Latrobe City Council on 1300 367 700.

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