



Air quality

Community
information



Part of EPA's role is to monitor air quality in Victoria. There are 13 long-term air monitoring stations that capture data in Melbourne, Geelong and the Latrobe Valley.

27 FEBRUARY 2014

EPA Victoria, 200 Victoria Street, Carlton.

Where is EPA monitoring in the Latrobe Valley?

There is a fixed air monitoring station located in Traralgon and EPA has set up two additional stations in Morwell South and Morwell East, as well as additional monitoring equipment in the area, in response to air quality impacts from the Hazelwood open cut mine fire.

Additionally, EPA staff have mobile monitors to collect information carbon monoxide at various locations throughout Morwell. Ash falling in the town is also being sampled and analysed.

What is being measured?

The key measurements EPA is taking as part of the Hazelwood open cut mine fire response are particles (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀) and carbon monoxide. Our stations also measure other parameters including sulphur dioxide.

Carbon monoxide is being monitored continuously, both at the mine site and in the Morwell community by emergency services HAZMAT (hazardous material) technicians.

What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas. It is made when carbon compounds burn and there is not enough oxygen. It can be harmful to humans. Personal CO testing is now available at medical centres in Morwell.

What is the difference between PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀?

PM_{2.5} refers to very small particles (less than 0.0025mm) that are the result of burning or combustion of material - in this case, coal. They are also the primary health risk to the community from the Hazelwood open cut mine fire.

PM₁₀ measurements include these very small particles, plus slightly larger ones up to 0.01mm in size. Such particles often come from wind-blown dust, road dust, industry and natural sea-salt.

How do you know you are testing in the right locations?

The monitoring locations have been chosen to ensure they are in the right place to capture the overall air quality in the area, as well as the very worst particles levels. This allows us to inform the Department of Health and emergency response services in Morwell.

When will air quality improve?

While progress has been made to extinguish the fire at the Hazelwood open cut mine, there are still potentially weeks of work ahead, with a large emergency response contingent in place dedicated to this fire.

The air quality in Morwell and Traralgon is very dependent on weather conditions. Air quality is generally better when wind is blowing smoke away from these small towns and if there has been rainfall. During times when the air

FURTHER INFORMATION

Department of Health:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/hazelwood/>

www.twitter.com/vicgovhealth
www.facebook.com/vicgovhealth
www.youtube.com/vicgovhealth

CFA:

<http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/>

Nurse on call:

Call NURSE-ON-CALL on
1300 60 60 24

Department of Human Services:

1800 00 64 68

What can I do to protect myself?

Excessive smoke levels can not only aggravate existing heart or lung conditions, but may also cause irritated eyes, coughing or wheezing.

Anyone with a heart or lung condition should take their medication as prescribed by their doctor, while people with asthma should follow their asthma management plan.

Air quality

It is clear we encourage you to open your home and air it out.

Where can I get information about air monitoring?

EPA has dedicated pages on our website directly related to Morwell and Traralgon air quality. Updates are provided hourly.

If you don't have access to the web, information will be available at the following places:

An information bus stationed at Morwell Bowling Club located at 52 Hazelwood Road, Morwell.

Moe Respite Centre at Moe Town Hall, Albert Street, Moe, open from 9 am - 7 pm daily. The opening and closing times may vary, depending on demand, so residents are urged to contact the Department of Human Services' Traralgon office on 03 5177 2500 (during business hours) for current information.

What are the impacts from ash?

The main health concern from ash is irritation to eyes, nose and throat. The particles are too large to be breathed deeply into the lungs.

Is the smoke toxic?

All smoke, including bushfire smoke, and smoke from coal mine fires, can be harmful to your health.

Further investigation into some of the more harmful substances in smoke is being undertaken.

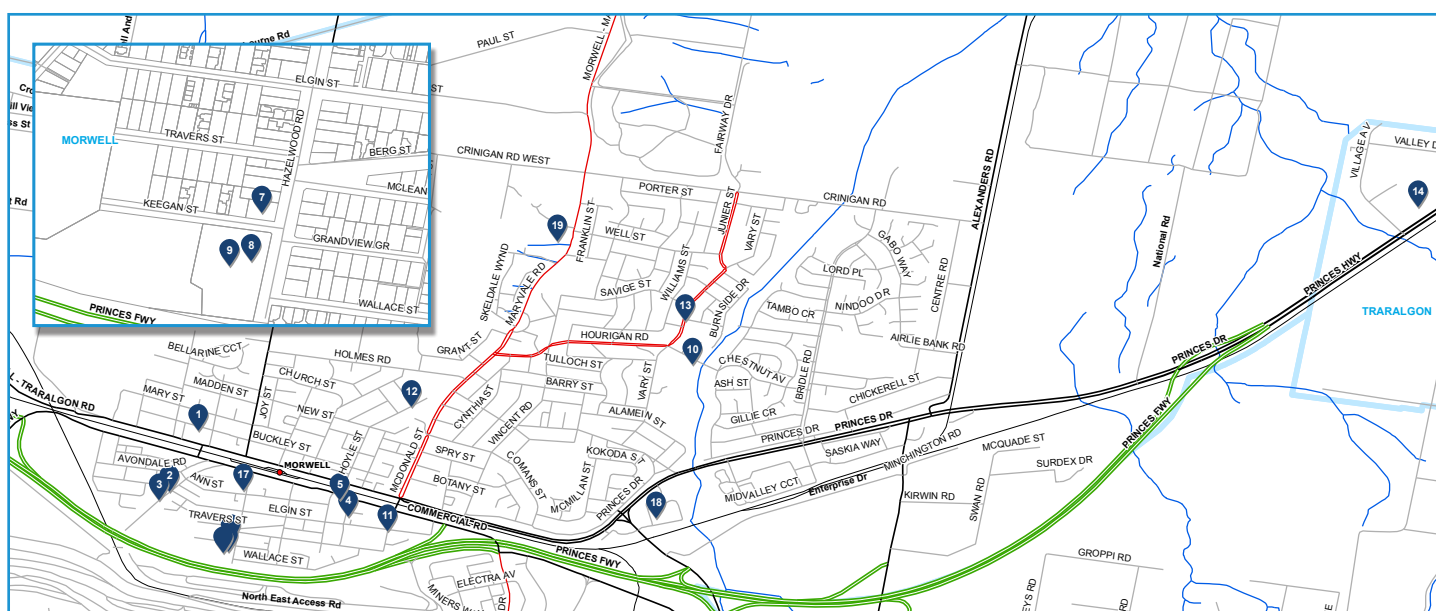
If you are concerned about your health you should seek medical advice, call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24 or visit a medical centre.

What is EPA doing to support the community?

EPA now has several air monitoring stations fanned across the Latrobe Valley giving us an increasingly broad view and predictive ability of the air quality.

Hourly air quality updates are available on our website. EPA officers are at the respite centre and several other locations around Morwell offering information to you on air quality monitoring.

Where air is being monitoring in Morwell and Traralgon



Mapping locations represent monitoring as of 21 February. Locations are subject to change. Data from sites 9 and 10 is available via our website. Other sites are being operated by emergency services. Data from both EPA sites and emergency services sites are being examined constantly to make assessments of air quality and risks to the community.