

HOLLOWAY, Elizabeth

From: HOLLOWAY, Elizabeth on behalf of RAU, Peter
Sent: Friday, 7 March 2014 3:52 PM
To: Exchange Mailboxes (all)
Subject: Update from the Acting Chief Officer

Operations



7 March 2014

Update from the Acting Chief Officer

Colleagues

As you would be aware, the EPA has been conducting sampling and testing for metal and chemical contaminants in water used at the Hazelwood coal mine fire. The results from these tests, and commentary provided by Occupational Health and Safety specialist AMCOSH, have been made available to all staff and posted on our intranet.

Last week I also agreed to allow the UFU to have an additional independent occupational hygienist from Bureau Veritas (BV), commissioned by the union, to be given access to collect samples alongside the EPA.

Analysis by both BV and AMCOSH shows that the sampled water does not pose an exposure risk for the contaminants analysed, ie PAHs and metals.

This morning, we were advised that the Bureau Veritas hygienist had undertaken other biological tests on water samples collected last week. These tests have indicated that high levels of coliforms and e-coli have been detected in water samples.

Initial tests conducted by EPA focused predominantly on the presence of PAHs and metals because these were the key concerns from an occupational health and safety perspective.

The fire services will take advice from health authorities to determine exactly what biological testing needs to be done; we will also discuss with the UFU with a view to both BV and AMCOSH conducting the same tests in future.

As a precaution, the SCC has advised firefighters working in the mine to follow these hygiene directives:

1. Protective nitrile gloves should be worn under fire fighting gloves (double gloving) where the risk of contamination is present. However nitrile gloves should not be worn during fire

fighting activities

2. Regular use of antiseptic hand gels or soap and water to maintain good hygiene
3. Visually, regularly inspect your skin and cover all open wounds with a water proof dressing and change the dressing regularly
4. Obtain first aid treatment immediately if you suffer an injury involving an open wound
5. Where the open wound cannot be appropriately covered or protected from potentially contaminated water or soil then advise your crew leader and seek alternate duties
6. Thoroughly clean your hands prior to:
 - Undertaking your health test and after deployment
 - Eating or drinking and after visiting the toilet.

Hazelwood mine fire update

The final 15 per cent of the fire remains a challenge and the fire agencies are working with mine personnel and machinery to gradually push tracks into an area that will allow Tele-Booms and compressed air foam equipment to get closer to the most active spots.

The Hazelwood Incident Controller remains confident the fire will likely be contained by early next week.

Firefighters will continue to be involved in the containment, blacking out, patrolling and monitoring the area over the coming weeks.

It is expected that smoke and ash will continue to be present during this period. Work will continue after that time to dig out any remaining hotspots.

STATEWIDE FIRE SITUATION

Nine Advice messages are in place across the state (as of 1900hrs - 6th March)

- Hazelwood Mine Fire (403 ha) Hundreds of firefighters, and dozens of trucks working around the clock.

Other significant incidents

- There is only one other remaining significant 'not yet under control' bushfire in East Gippsland: Goongerah - Deddick Trail (165,721 ha)

Please note, after today we will be moving to updates as required.

Peter Rau
Acting Chief Officer