

Carbon Monoxide Exposure Risks

SCC-Vic (State Controller - Fire)

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Cc: SCC-Vic (OH&S Executive Advisor); SCC-Vic (Resources Unit); SCC-Vic (Interstate/International Liaison Unit)

Importance: High

Smoke and the production of other toxic products are inherent in bush and other types of fires. The current fire at the Morwell open cut coal mine is producing smoke and also Carbon Monoxide due to the incomplete burning of the coal. Agencies are to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are employed to address this risk.

Exposure to Carbon Monoxide can pose higher levels of risk to specific personnel and the following advice has been provided by the SCC OHS advisor.

General Health Issues

Individuals who have a history of cardiovascular or respiratory conditions should not be deployed to this incident. This is due to the increased sensitivities that might be attributable from increased carbon monoxide levels in the open cut fire.

Female Firefighters

State emergency agencies have received medical advice from the MFB and CFA Medical Officers and the Deputy Regional Health Commander at the Incident Management Team at Hazelwood that there is a risk to the foetus of pregnant women exposed to high levels of concentrations of carbon monoxide potentially present at this incident.

Health and safety is the State emergency agencies highest priority and because of this risk any female fire-fighter who is pregnant or there is any chance that they may be pregnant, should not attend this incident due to the increased potential exposure to carbon monoxide. Female firefighter should seriously consider this advice.

Pre Deployment

Crews planning to be deployed for a shift in the open cut fires should have 24hrs of "clear time" away from smoke logged incidents (e.g. prior deployments).

This information should be made available to all personnel within all agencies who are deploying staff to the coal mine fire

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