



Hazelwood Inquiry info/DPC@DTF

08/05/2014 09:01 PM

To Hazelwood Inquiry
info/DPC@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Morwell Mine Fire Submission

1 attachment



HAZELWOOD-MINE-FIRE-SUBMISSION.docx

Title: Mr.

First Name: Anthony

Surname: Lalor

Email address: [REDACTED]

Home or office phone: [REDACTED]

Content of submission (you can choose multiple): Response to fire by Hazelwood Coal Mine

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08/05/14

To whom it may concern,

On 09/02/14 as a member of the C.F.A. strike team No. 9081 I was deployed to assist in the fire fight situated in the worked out sections of the Morwell Open Cut.

Our initial instructions related to fire impacting on the Morwell Briquette Factory and environs. On arrival at the Briquette factory it was apparent that the fire had not extended to this area and we were redeployed immediately to attack the fire as it began to run up the eastern batters and impact buildings and infrastructure directly adjacent to these batters.

When attempting to enter the Open Cut areas we were confronted by closed and locked security gates and security fencing. Much time was spent attempting to contact mine management in an attempt to gain entry. Attempts were also made to gain access by cutting locks and/or chains on the gates but as a result of the high quality of these materials these attempts were unsuccessful.

Failing in our attempts our strike team was therefore required to seek another point of ingress. We redeployed to another unmanned gate which was apparently operated remotely and again attempted to gain access. Attempts were again futile and after repeated requests mine management finally remotely activated this gate to allow us to finally reach the fire edge.

We immediately began fire suppression activities on a number of structures and associated grassland areas, strategically moving our efforts as the need arose. The fire at one stage impacted on the rising conveyor servicing the Morwell Briquette Factory and we were advised that this was a vital asset and therefore concentrated our efforts on this structure. We were again hampered in our efforts by security fencing surrounding this structure but nevertheless achieved a good outcome in controlling the fires spread and subsequent damage. Imagine our surprise later on in the night to find that the in situ fire protection sprinklers were activated within the conveyor structure after we had suppressed the fire

Our strike team was by this stage in desperate need to replenish our water supplies and so the task of securing a reliable, high volume, easily accessible water source began. Mine personnel struggled to understand the need for high volume water sources and a number of attempts were made to achieve suitable outcomes. Pumps that had failed due to power outages and with no backup power source proved problematic, as were the restrictions on our tankers draughting from dams and storages due to contamination concerns.

After a number of futile attempts we finally sourced a reasonable refill site and began to return to the areas of fire activity. Up to this point we had had very little contact with mine personnel and were reliant on our own initiative to gain access to mine locations that were subject to fire attack. Signage was nonexistent and as stated previously assistance from mine personnel was sadly lacking.

At one stage we were assigned two mine workers to assist our efforts and were directed to carry out asset protection works principally along the Northern batters adjacent to the Princes Freeway. This work involved fire suppression and protection of 66 Kv power lines and associated infrastructure. Access to these areas was via unformed tracks which had not been maintained in any manner and therefore vehicular access was severely compromised.

As we had been relocated we were once again required to go through the laborious and time consuming task of replenishing our tanker water supplies. Again low flow water points were required to be used and incompatible hose threads and fittings combined to make the task onerous.

We continued our fire fighting activities along the Northern batters areas before returning to carry out asset protection in the vicinity of "The Ridge" where we were again hampered by the large number of security fences with locked gates to slow our progress. Despite these obstacles we achieved significant gains in suppressing the progress of the fire in these areas.

Our strike team was released from the mine at approximately 0700 hours on 10/02/14 having commenced duties at approximately 1800 hrs on 06/02/14.

In summary our firefighting efforts were hampered by the following:

- LACK OF ACCESS
- LACK OF APPROPRIATE SIGNAGE
- POOR AVAILABILITY OF SOURCES OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE
- INADEQUATE WATER POINTS
- POORLY MAINTAINED ACCESS TRACKS
- LACK OF COORDINATION BY MINE PERSONNEL
- INADEQUATE OR NON EXISTANT FIRE PREVENTION MEASURES IN AND AROUND MINE