

Unite & Recover

Mine fire recovery 2014

15

NEWSLETTER

EPA

EPA Victoria continues monitoring and testing for environmental impacts of the fire, working closely with the Department of Health.

EPA's environmental monitoring has transitioned to the recovery phase and we'll conduct an air monitoring program in Morwell and surrounding areas for the year ahead. This includes maintaining our monitoring stations at Morwell and Traralgon and continuing fine particle monitoring in Moe and Churchill.

This will continue until we have compelling evidence that the air quality has returned to a sustained acceptable standard.

What is EPA testing?

- Sampling of minor contaminants in coal smoke collected as gases, in canisters and as particles.

We post the results of these once they become available. Sampling will continue for at least a year.

- Particular emphasis on analysing the air for levels of small particles (PM) and carbon monoxide (CO).

A knowledge of all these components of the air is needed in order to assess the impacts the fire has had on people and the environment.

Why is EPA testing for particulate matter (PM)?

PM is a term that refers to any particle that can be found in the air, but is more obvious and visible in dust, soot or smoke. The numbers '10' and '2.5' indicate the scale of the particles. Most of the new PM monitoring around Morwell and the Latrobe Valley has been PM2.5, as this provides a better measure for health authorities to determine health impacts.

We measure PM because the matter is so small it can be inhaled into the lungs and can result in a variety of health effects. For more information on health impacts from smoke and PM, see the Department of Health website.

Health

The Department of Health continues to provide health advice on air quality samples collected by EPA. The most recent report relates to air samples collected between 5 March and 3 April. The results show that all substances were at safe levels. To view the full report, select 'Air quality tests' from the left hand navigation at www.health.vic.gov.au/hazelwood

Long-term health effects

Long term health effects from air pollution usually occur after several years or a lifetime of exposure.

The smoke from the Hazelwood open cut mine fire has affected local air quality for a number of weeks, rather than years, so long-term health effects are not expected. However, a study will be undertaken to ensure that health effects, if any, are identified.

Long-term health effects study

This study will be carried out by an independent research organisation and will measure the impact, if any, of the mine fire on heart and lung disease, malignant disease (cancers), mental health outcomes and the birth weight of newborn babies.

Public consultation sessions were held in Morwell on Tuesday 6 May. You can contribute online at www.health.vic.gov.au/hazelwood or you can collect a hard copy feedback form from the Community Information and Recovery Centre at 20 Hazelwood Road, Morwell.

Ash in roof cavities

Should I remove ash or dust from my home's roof cavity / ceiling space?

It is not necessary to clean the ash out of your roof cavity to protect your health. The ash is non-hazardous and similar to that found in a typical fireplace. If you climb into the ceiling space or bring the ceiling down during a major renovation you will be exposed to dust and ash.

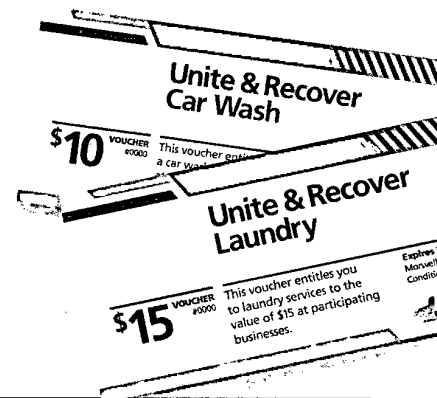
If you have a pre-existing lung condition such as asthma you should avoid exposure to dust and ash. If you must enter the roof space or another dusty area, wear a facemask to minimise any irritation.

Latrobe City Council Car wash and laundry vouchers extended to end May

For Morwell residents who still wish to claim their car wash and laundry vouchers the offer has been extended until Saturday 31 May 2014.

The vouchers can be used at local businesses and can be collected from the Community Information and Recovery Centre at 20 Hazelwood Road, Morwell.

For more information contact the recovery team on 1800 017 777.



For more information:

Community Information and Recovery Centre | Phone: 1800 017 777 | Address: 20 Hazelwood Road, Morwell | Visit: morwellfirenoticeboard.org
recovery.vic.gov.au | latrobe.vic.gov.au | health.vic.gov.au | epa.vic.gov.au