

Media release

Thursday, 20 February 2014

Latrobe Valley mine fires - update

Rain on Wednesday and early this morning has made conditions difficult but fire crews have made significant progress at the Hazelwood Mine.

Weather conditions today are expected to deteriorate with 40 km/h winds and gusts of up to 60 km/h.

Ladder platforms and other aerial appliances, ground monitors, pumpers and tanker trucks and aircraft continue to extinguish fires in the northern and southern batters of the Hazelwood Mine. Overnight rain made moving equipment through the mine difficult and firefighters had to work in wet, muddy conditions.

“Safety of firefighters and the community remains our number one priority,” Incident Controller Barry Foss said.

“This fire remains a complex one that will still take some weeks to bring under control. As a result smoke will continue to affect Morwell. I encourage anyone concerned about the smoke to seek out information and take advantage of the new respite centre now set up in Moe.”

A number of community initiatives are now in place after a community meeting was held on Tuesday. A respite centre has opened in Moe with representatives from all key agencies including CFA, EPA, Ambulance Victoria Department of Health and Department of Human Services available to provide information.

The centre at Moe Town Hall is available to anyone who need respite from smoky conditions near the mine. Children’s facilities are available.

EPA has doubled its monitoring of conditions. New monitoring stations and mobile equipment has been set up. Extra data on conditions in Morwell will be available in coming days. More information is available on the EPA website www.epa.vic.gov.au or by calling 1300 EPA VIC (1300 372 842).

Further community engagement is planned with a letter box drop of key information and contact details in areas badly affected by smoke and ash. Also, an information bus will be in Elgin St today near Morwell Coles from 9am-5pm. Community officers will be available in a number of central locations through the day:

- Moe Coles from 1pm-2pm
- Newborough Leisure Centre BBQ area 2.30pm-3.30pm
- Trafalgar Fire Station 6pm-7pm

Management of the Yallourn mine fire is expected to be handed back to EnergyAustralia but will continue to be supported by Victorian fire agencies.

For more information: CFA ICC Traralgon 5177 3286