

Incident Control Centre Hazelwood

Media release

Saturday 1 March 2014

Hazelwood mine fire update

There was a significant reduction in active fire in the northern batters section closest to Morwell last night.

Incident Controller, John Haynes said this was due to favourable weather conditions, an increase in nightshift resourcing and successful use of compressed air foam on the batters.

"Fire activity in the southern batters has also been reduced, with the ground gained over the past few days holding overnight. This area is being monitored and patrolled," he said.

"We're making steady inroads and the predicted light winds in the next few days should help us continue with this progress.

"Today is a good day for making ground again as long as the winds stay in our favour."

Air quality

Significant to severe smoke is likely in Morwell South, especially during the afternoon today. Moe and Morwell East are also likely to experience significant smoke at times. Traralgon may experience some smoke but the risk is lower than for the other towns.

Wind forecasts for Saturday evening and Sunday indicate south-westerly to south-easterly winds throughout this time, suggesting an extended period of smoke impacts in Morwell South and Morwell East.

Morwell residents are reminded to avoid unnecessary strenuous outdoor activity, including organised sporting events, until air quality conditions improve.

Victoria's Chief Health Officer, Dr Rosemary Lester, said prolonged heavy physical activity in the current conditions could trigger respiratory problems.

Community Information

Updated reports show that since the mine fire started, over 10,000 people have been spoken to face-to-face through over 120 separate engagement activities.

Those activities continue and more are being included to ensure affected communities are kept informed about the fire situation and its effects on health and the environment.

The Moe Town Hall respite centre is open on Albert Street from 9.00am till 7.00pm and offers a relaxed air conditioned space to have a cuppa and take a break from the smoke.

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CFA information buses will be in various locations between the Mid-Valley shopping centre and Hazelwood South over the next few days.

The Community Health Assessment Centre is open from 8.00am till 8.00pm at the Ambulance Victoria Gippsland Regional Office, 2 Saskia Way in Morwell, next to the Mid-Valley Shopping Centre.

The Community Information and Recovery Centre at 22 Hazelwood Rd, Morwell will be open from 9.00am till 6.00pm daily. The centre offers support and information from council, DHS, Red Cross, CFA, Victorian Council of Churches and other key agencies.

CFA community liaison officers will attend a regular meeting of the local Sudanese community from 5.00 till 6.00pm today and CFA and EPA representatives will ride the buses to and from Morwell to the Boolarra Festival over the weekend.

Morwell residents seeking respite from the smoky conditions are being offered free train travel with V/Line, available from today. 18 return train services between Morwell and Melbourne each weekday will be free of charge.

Temporary relocation away from the smoke is now recommended for people aged over 65, pre-school aged children (under 5, including babies and infants), pregnant women and anyone with a pre-existing heart or lung condition living or working in Morwell South, south of the railway line in Commercial Road.

Advice and support regarding temporary relocation is available through Department of Human Services on **1800 006 468** or visit: www.dhs.vic.gov.au

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