

## Incident Control Centre Hazelwood

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# Media release

Sunday 2 March 2014

### Hazelwood mine fire update

Fire crews have made significant progress overnight on the Hazelwood open cut fire in the last 24 hours with infra-red line scans showing reduction in active fire in the batters.

Incident Controller, Bob Barry said this was due to favourable weather conditions and excellent work conducted by day and night crews.

"We're making steady inroads and the predicted light winds in the next few days should help us continue with this progress, ahead of the potential for increased fire behaviour on Tuesday and Wednesday.

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

"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.

"Our focus will shift over the next few days to the southern batters to further reduce the smoke impact on Morwell and Morwell South"

**\*\*Media: Please note attached infra-red line scan image\*\***

#### Air quality

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

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

Victoria's Chief Health Officer, Dr Rosemary Lester, has advised people aged over 65, pre-school aged children, pregnant women and anyone with a pre-existing heart or lung condition living or working in Morwell South to consider temporary relocation because of the Hazelwood mine fire.

Latest indications are that the fire may not be extinguished in the near future and as a result Dr Lester has determined the best way for vulnerable people in Morwell South to avoid the continuing smoke and manage their health would be to temporarily relocate.

Over the past two weeks Dr Lester has been advising people in 'at risk' groups to reduce their exposure to smoke and ash. Given this exposure is now likely to continue, advice to temporarily relocate has been issued as a sensible precaution.

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## 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.

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.

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](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au)

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