

# Incident Control Centre Hazelwood

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7 March, 2014

## Media release

### Hazelwood open cut mine fire - update

**FSC Review:** Fire Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley today announced a review of fire management plans for the Latrobe Valley brown coal mines.

"We are managing a very significant fire at Hazelwood and have learned a lot over the past four weeks. The idea behind this review is to use our experiences to review the fire management planning approach to brown coal open cut mining," he said. "It will consider policy, practices and guides that are currently used by the industry and emergency services for preventing fires, responding to fires and protection of assets, infrastructure and people."

Mr Lapsley said the review would be driven by his office and would include the Central Gippsland Essential Industry Group.

"The steps we will take include doing a stocktake of current and relevant documents, identification of strategic and operational issues and identification of best practice approaches. This will then be turned into a report that will play an important role in improving the state, national and international ability of emergency services to manage mine fires like we have seen at Hazelwood."

**United Firefighters Union (UFU) Water Concerns:** Incident Controller John Haynes today said he was confident that water being used in the mine did not pose any health risk to firefighters but that testing had been ramped up to ease concerns of firefighters.

"We are using water from Pond Four for firefighting and this water is being tested for metals and organic compounds three times a week in conjunction with EPA, independent hygienists and the UFU," Mr Haynes said. "These results have shown us that the water from this pond does not pose a risk to our firefighters."

"In response to concerns expressed by UFU about bacteria, EPA yesterday began assisting with conducting micro-biological testing. Those results will be available in coming days."

Hygiene processes at the mine have recently been further stepped up to include a pump pack of anti-bacterial wash on all trucks, while the use of goggles, disposable gloves (used underneath personal protective clothing gloves) and a mask is strongly recommended for firefighters.

"Importantly, when firefighters undergo health checks before entering the site, they are asked if they have any wounds. If so, waterproof dressing is placed over them before entry," Mr Haynes said.

"All members are also advised in briefings and at health check to be aware of the situation, and to take responsibility for their own safety, as this should always be their number one priority."

**Conditions:** EPA Victoria's unprecedented air monitoring efforts in the Latrobe Valley today revealed the levels of PM2.5 – the invisible particles causing the most health concern for residents – are at their lowest levels since the Hazelwood coal mine fire started almost a month ago.

Carbon monoxide levels from the burning coal are significantly lower than previous weeks and remain within safe limits.



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