

Incident Control Centre Hazelwood

MEDIA RELEASE

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Hazelwood open cut mine fire – update 25/03

After 45 days of intensive firefighting the Hazelwood open cut mine fire has been officially declared 'safe', and management handed back to the mine operators, Fire Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley said today.

Mr Lapsley said today was a major milestone and marked the end of a long and difficult time for the Morwell community and firefighters.

"When an incident is declared safe it means fire authorities are confident it no longer poses any threat to people or communities," he said.

"The open cut mine is officially being handed back to GDF Suez with today the last shift with Victorian and interstate fire services physically working at the mine.

"The community may still see a few puffs of smoke as the mine operators continue to work on extinguishing small hot spots, but CFA will continue to support GDF Suez with management support and advice and the local CFA will be liaising closely with the mine owners, and be on hand to help if needed."

The northern batters, the area that was closest to Morwell and one of the most fire intense areas that put smoke and ash over the town for many weeks, was declared safe on Friday. Management of the mine has been progressively handed back to the mine operators.

"This fire has for more than five weeks caused significant concern to the communities of Morwell and the Latrobe Valley and the health concerns of both the community and firefighters have added an extra layer of complexity to the fire fight," Mr Lapsley said.

"This has been an extremely challenging fire and we have to acknowledge the hard work of Victorian and interstate fire services and incident management personnel throughout the past 45 days."

More than 7000 individual firefighters have worked through the mine, and at the peak of the fire more than 500 people were working directly and indirectly on the fire and its effect.

On peak days:

- 123.8 million litres of water was used per day and recirculated by ground crews and aircraft to fight the fire. That is around **86,000** litres per minute.
- The aircraft that worked on the fire dropped an average of **1540** litres of foam per day on the fire.
- More than **1,000** carbon monoxide tests on emergency services people were done each day of the 45 days.
- Over **300** accommodation bookings each day in Morwell, Traralgon, Moe and Sale for staff from many different agencies working on the mine fire and its effects.
- Staff working at the mine consumed approximately **1500** meals per day.

ENDS



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