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Poor air quality signals a call for workplace safety

The Victorian WorkCover Authority is advising workplaces in the Latrobe Valley to take steps to reduce the impact of bushfire and coal fire smoke on their staff, as fires continue to affect air quality in the region.

VWA Executive Director of Health and Safety Len Neist said workplaces should take note of the advice issued by the Department of Health in relation to people undertaking strenuous activity outdoors, particularly those with pre-existing heart and lung conditions.

"The EPA and the Department of Health are providing updates for the entire Latrobe Valley community and there are daily community meetings, so employers can keep abreast of any developments that might affect their staff," Mr Neist said.

"Workplaces operating near the Hazelwood coal mine fire should be particularly alert to variable air quality and monitor the EPA and Department of Health websites for updated information.

"We're asking businesses to review their systems of work and consider if measures need to be put in place to protect staff from the risks associated with smoke. Reassigning staff with pre-existing conditions to non-strenuous, indoor work is one action workplaces can take to reduce risk to their staff.

"The smoke haze is also affecting visibility in some areas, which may pose risks to staff operating machinery and equipment. If conditions make it difficult to see the workspace and other surroundings, work should be postponed.

"Overall, ongoing communication is key. Have a conversation in your workplace about the conditions and encourage staff to speak up if they identify any risks to health and safety."

Anyone with concerns about their health should seek medical advice or call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24.

For further information, go to epa.vic.gov.au, health.vic.gov.au or contact the VWA Advisory Service on 1800 136 089.