

11 February 2014

Tony Ferrazza

Hazelwood Mine Fire February 2014 Victorian Worksafe Initial Site Visit

Initial Site Contact:

Tony Ferrazza (Worksafe) met with Luke Middleton (OH&S Co-ordinator) of Hazelwood Mine (HM) at the site Emergency Response Control Room (ERCM) above the southern batters of the mine.

Initial observations:

- Evidence of recent grass fire along the crest of the batter at ground level in the vicinity of the ERCM;
- Visible smoke "sifting" within the open cut void allowing very limited visibility in the eastern section of the mine. Note the coal operating faces are to the west;
- HM officer at the entry into the ERCM logging all personnel movements in and out of the fire areas. A log was being kept for Carbon Monoxide (CO) testing of all HM and contractor personnel working/entering smoke affected areas. CFA were running a parallel system for their own people. The procedure was that all crib breaks and lunch breaks are to be held at the ERCM when individual CO testing is to be done; giving a 2 to 2.5hr testing cycle.
- The site is following an escalation procedure for exposure levels to CO which at 4% results in personnel not allowed back into the mine.

Initial discussions with LM:

- Discussion with LM that TF is not an inspector and any information provided by the duty holder was voluntary.
- VWA's concern was the safety of employees and the visit was not to be seen as interfering with the emergency response but to observe and assess the measures in place for protecting the health and safety of the employees engaged in working in the mine. Hence, matters of interest were:
 - Site was following its emergency response plan;
 - The dynamic nature of the incident was adequately managed;
 - The exposure of employees and contractors to smoke inhalation and fatigue was being managed;
 - Clear lines of management and control were defined between CFA; response and site response, especially where site personnel were working as volunteers for the CFA.
- HM have briefed their crews on the importance of not taking risks, driving to conditions, working in small groups and looking out for each other's safety and continuous communication with their supervisor and the control room through two way radio.

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Managing Exposure to Carbon Monoxide:

- CO monitoring was undertaken:
 - On an individual basis with personal gas monitors in critical areas.
 - On a group basis (not sufficient personal monitors) by logging individual's exposure time (as discussed above). Note that additional individual gas monitors had been organised to arrive later.
 - Select monitoring points around the mine managed by the CFA.

Fatigue Management:

- A spreadsheet with contractors logging the hrs worked is being maintained by HM.
- Supervisors are logging their own crew's hours.

Incident Control Management:

- Peter Lockwood (CFA) – Incident Controller
- Rob Dugan (HM) – Emergency Commander
- Darren Grieve – Logistics Officer

CFA Management:

- CFA controller described the fire response plan.
- CFA provided a copy of the Site Incident Action Plan.

HM Briefing:

- I was invited to sit in on the HM 12.00pm briefing.
- Rob Dugan ran the meeting which was to report on current utilisation of resources, identifying issues and setting priorities and coordinate HM's response activities.
- Discussion Points:
 - Current location of employees and contractors
 - Strategy to protect vital assets for continued coal mining
 - Fatigue and smoke inhalation management
 - Priority to keep power lines protected along the northern batters for fire service pumping, protecting the operating coal faces to the west, extinguishing spot fires along the overburden dump
 - Weather forecast and wind directions

Other Issues:

- HM are open to provide any information to VWA as requested
- Site OHS representatives were not available for discussion
- Other hazards such as batter instability through excess water were identified and controlled.