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Dear all

UPDATE ON THE FIRE PREVENTION WORK OF THE COAL MINE TASKFORCE

As the weather warms up, I am writing to you to let you know of the fire prevention and mitigation work that has been completed in the past few months to prepare for this summer.

It has been a challenging year for the residents of Morwell and surrounds and the Hazelwood coal-mine fire has had a lasting impact on the community. I know that the recovery continues. The ongoing cleanup and monitoring efforts supported by Latrobe City Council, the Environment Protection Agency, the Department of Human Services and Red Cross are all important parts of that process.

As part of the response to the inquiry, the Coal Mine Emergency Management Taskforce was put in place to ensure that responsible departments, agencies and the owner/operator of the mines have appropriate plans and processes in place to prevent, prepare for, and respond to, any threat of fire in and around the mines this summer.

As head of the Taskforce, I will continue to monitor the progress of emergency services and coal-mine operators to boost fire preparation and prevention measures.

The Taskforce works with the three Latrobe Valley mines - Hazelwood, Loy Yang and Yallourn - and includes representatives from CFA, council, EPA, the Victorian Work Cover Authority, and the Department of State Development, Business and Innovation (DSDBI) Earth Resources – Mine Regulator.

A great deal of work has already been done by the members of the taskforce, all targeted at reducing fire risk and increasing response capabilities should a fire start outside of and reach or start in one of the mines.

Hot spots and small fires are not unusual in coal mines and occur every year, but the aim is to prevent them from spreading and to bring any fires safely and quickly under control.

Recently, a fire was detected in the Loy Yang mine, and the mine operators and emergency services were able to respond and bring that incident under control safely.

Preparations in and around the three mines for this summer include:

- Three aircraft now based at the Latrobe Valley Airport for this summer
- Significantly increased fire response capability within mines
- Renewed firebreaks around the major mines
- Significantly reduced vegetation within the mines to reduce fire risk
- Program of 'wetting down' of non-operational mine areas on extreme fire danger days
- Improved identification systems of potential mine 'hotspots' to improve first response including hand held detectors, fixed detectors and surveillance aircraft



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- A specialist Compressed Air Foam System (CAFS) truck to be based in the Valley
- Formal training with local emergency services on emergency response

There is always more to do, and we will continue to work locally with the taskforce members and the community. But the developments in detection, preparation and levels of cooperation mean the Latrobe Valley is better prepared than ever for fire if it occurs this year.

Should you have any questions related to the work of the taskforce, you can contact my office on admin@emv.vic.gov.au but I would also encourage you to talk to those that live and work in your community, including your local CFA members, the mines operators and local council about what they're doing to prepare, and how you can prepare as well.

Finally, I want wish you and your family a safe and happy Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.

Yours sincerely



Craig Lapsley PSM
Emergency Management Commissioner