



MEDIA RELEASE

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COALMINE TASKFORCE STATUS REPORT AVAILABLE

The first status report from the Coal Mine Emergency Management Taskforce is now available and shows that works to improve fire preparation and prevention measures in Victoria's mines are well underway.

Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley said emergency services and mine owners and operators are now better placed to respond to a fire in one of the mines and minimise its impacts.

"We cannot completely prevent fires in coal mines but we now have better systems in place to bring any fires under control safely and quickly and to ensure that any impacts to communities and power supplies are kept to a minimum," he said.

The Latrobe Valley Coal Mine Emergency Management Taskforce was established in September 2014 as part of the response to the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry. It works to ensure responsible departments, agencies and the mine owner/operators have appropriate plans and processes in place to prevent, prepare for and respond to any threat of fire in and around the mines.

The taskforce works with the three Latrobe Valley mines - Hazelwood, Loy Yang and Yallourn - and includes representatives from CFA, Latrobe City Council, EPA, the Victorian Workcover Authority, the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources and the Department of Health and Human Services.

"Members of the taskforce have worked collaboratively to improve the mitigation and prevention planning and the response to any threat of fire in and around the mines," Mr Lapsley said.

"The taskforce's first status report captures the activities that have been undertaken in the group's first three months which includes additional localised air-attack presence, stronger links and working relationships between the coalmine operators and emergency services, improved vegetation management and 'wetting-down' programs and more formalised training."

The report notes the activity undertaken by the Surf Coast Taskforce, as this was formed after the Latrobe Valley Taskforce, given the immediate response required following the February 2014 fire at Hazelwood.

The taskforce is a component of the State's response to the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry and has been allocated certain responsibilities to be reported on through Emergency Management Victoria. It does not report against other specific recommendations made by the Inquiry.

Mr Lapsley said Victoria had so far been relatively fortunate this summer with more mild conditions resulting in less fire activity, but said as vegetation continues to dry out, the risks and associated challenges will remain across the Latrobe Valley.

The full status report is available on www.emv.vic.gov.au

For further information:

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