



Coal Mine Emergency Management Taskforce

Report on Exercise “Latrobe 15”

Conducted 8 & 9 October 2015 –
Latrobe Valley, Victoria

V1 20 November 2015

A decorative graphic element consisting of a series of overlapping, colored bands (blue, red, yellow, and grey) that form a V-shape pointing downwards, resembling a stylized mountain range or a valley. The bands are layered, with blue on top, followed by red, yellow, and grey at the bottom.

Working in conjunction
with Communities,
Government, Agencies
and Business.

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1. Background

The Coal Mine Emergency Management Taskforce was formed with key priorities, to improve the fire readiness and response capability of the coal mine industry and associated response and support agencies in the Latrobe Valley.

It is critical from an output and success measurement aspect. That the plans and initiatives implemented during the period since the activation of the Coal Mine Emergency Management Taskforce in September 2104, be tested and validated, by way of engaging all key stakeholders to be jointly involved in a tactical exercise without troops (TEWT) style exercise.

The completion of a pre bushfire season facilitated exercise was to test the clarity of roles and responsibilities, capability and readiness of stakeholders at an assurance level prior to the upcoming fire season. The exercise was designed to identify and provide insight into response arrangements and capability for key players to "*work as one.*"

An exercise of this type was aimed at identifying and acknowledging inherent strengths in capacity and capability to help build confidence in the community. Hence, to be successful it must also assist in identifying any areas for improvement and therefore providing a level of future direction and actions.

The exercise name "Latrobe 15" was designated to provide for location identity and the year giving lead for future similar exercises to become inherent in emergency management practices into the future.

2. Overview

Victoria is one of the most bushfire prone areas in the world. Victoria experiences bushfires every fire season. Many of these bushfires are catastrophic events resulting in the loss of life and property. The Latrobe Valley, like much of Victoria and many parts of Australia, has been greatly affected by bushfire.

The Latrobe Valley is home to three open cut brown coal mines. Open cut brown coal mines are particularly vulnerable to fire and to fire that spreads quickly and is difficult to extinguish.

The Hazelwood mine fire that began on 9 February 2014 was the largest and longest burning mine fire that has occurred in the Latrobe Valley to date. The fire was caused by embers spotting into the Hazelwood mine from bushfires burning in close proximity to the mine. The mine fire burned for 45 days. The fire sent smoke and ash over the town of Morwell and surrounding areas for much of that time.

The Hazelwood mine fire constituted two emergencies: a major complex fire emergency and a serious public health emergency.

3. Exercise aim

Assess the preparation for and response to a Major Incident in the Latrobe Valley in accordance with local plans and arrangements.

4. Exercise objectives

The scripted scenario was planned to:

1. Assess and test the preparedness levels of Industry and Emergency Management Agencies leading into a period of extreme fire risk by providing evidence of actions implemented to address.
2. Validate the integration of Industry and Emergency Management Agencies planning and preparedness. By providing proof of plans and works put in place to mitigate risks and reduce impacts.
3. Measure response capability in line with identified threat levels.
4. Explore the incident management arrangements in response to a major incident.
5. Practise the transfer of control process.
6. Explore the integration of detection, analysis and monitoring operations and information transfer into the Incident Management Team.
7. Validate an integrated formulation of public information and community engagement processes in response to an incident with significant community impact.

8. To recognise areas of improved capability and those requiring further attention to reduce fire risk and enhance community safety.

A key aspect of the exercise was to display and practice the integration of industry into the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS). This being a vital component of the HCMFI Recommendation 2 relating to the piloting of integrated incident management teams and adoption of AIIMS philosophy within industry. The exercise was considered part of the pilot process.

Industry participating included the three Latrobe Valley Brown Coal Mines, Australian Paper (APM) a major hazard facility and Hancocks Plantations (HPV).

5. Exercise scope

It is considered that "Latrobe 15" was the first Multi-Industry and Agency exercise of its type ever conducted in the Latrobe Valley or in fact Victoria. It was therefore important to run it in a manner that encouraged involvement and provided a learning environment to facilitate knowledge sharing and a better understanding of the challenges facing local industry and agencies. It is acknowledged that more complex exercises formally involving the State Control Centre and recognising a broader risk consequence will be planned in the future.

The exercise was a facilitated discussion exercise involving the key stakeholders; no actual deployments of personnel were to occur. This is with the exception of the EPA who deployed a new mobile air monitoring station to ascertain mobility and set up time capability. However, other evidence of resource allocations for such a scenario was provided. The exercise was focussed on planning and response arrangements at the local and regional level.

The exercise was conducted by a highly experienced independent facilitator.

6. Exercise Outline and timeline

The exercise was based on a period of very high to extreme fire conditions during summer.

To simulate planning and preparedness activities carried out in the time leading up to a forecast high fire danger period a Regional Emergency Management Team (REMT) meeting was scheduled on Monday 5 October, 4 days prior to the true exercise. All participating stakeholders including industry were requested to attend.

This was conducted at the Loy Yang Power Station Incident Management Centre with 35 in attendance. A Situation, Mission, Execution, Administration, Command/Communications and Safety (SMEACS) briefing was conducted by CFA for the following Thursday as a day of very high fire danger for the Latrobe Valley in January 2016.

The exercise was conducted in a four hour block on the afternoon of Thursday 8 October. The scenario of a bush fire starting north of Yallourn North and rapidly spreading south and

impacting both the Yallourn and Hazelwood mines before a wind change with smoke impacts on Morwell was run. Participants were not introduced to the fire scenario until after they had provided evidence and discussed as an IMT, their preparedness plans following the SMEACS briefing on the Monday before.

Pheonix modelling and predictive escalation rate mapping with timing was provided to set the overall scenario.

Individual scenario prompts were provided to appropriate participants during varying stages of the exercise to clarify situation and prompt action for verification and discussion as part of the facilitation process.

Dinner that evening provided time for reflection and further discussion on the afternoon and the direction and requirements of the final three hour session on the morning of Friday 9 October.

The final session on Friday was dedicated to wrapping the fire scenario and discussing components being:

- Transfer of Control
- The State Smoke Framework and the Standard for Managing Significant CO Emissions
- Data analysis and monitoring around air quality
- Public information and warnings
- Community recovery

7. Participating Agencies and Industries

Total attendance numbers were recorded as follows:

Monday 5 October 2015 SMEACS briefing of key personnel – 35

Thursday 8 October 2015, day one of exercise – 68

Thursday 8 Evening dinner and reflection period – 57

Friday 9 October, day two of exercise - 62

All taskforce member agencies/industries attended being:

- Latrobe City Council
- Worksafe Victoria
- Dept Economic Development, Jobs, Technology and Training (DEDJTR)
- Country Fire Authority (CFA)
- Environment Protection Authority (EPA)
- Dept Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- AGL - Loy Yang

- Energy Australia – Yallourn
- GDF SUEZ – Hazelwood
- Emergency Management Victoria (EMV)

Additional:

- Victoria Police (Vicpol)
- Ambulance Victoria (AV)
- Dept Environment Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)?
- State Emergency Service (SES)
- Australian Paper Mills – Maryvale (APM)
- HPV Plantations
- Gippsland Water

Observers included:

- IGEM Representatives
- Member of the Implementation Monitor team
- Central Gippsland Essential Industries Group (CGEIG) representative
- SP Ausnet
- Telstra
- CFA
- Estate Services Yallourn
- Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB)
- EPA
- Victoria Police
- Dept Health and Human Services
- Dept Economic Development, Jobs, Technology and Training (DEDJT)
- Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC)
- Emergency Management Victoria (EMV)

8. Evaluation

The exercise and associated questioning process was aimed at verifying levels of preparedness and response capability against the 8 exercise objectives detailed in section 4 above.

All responses and relevant comments have been captured in a document titled "Exercise Chronology, Actions/Responses and Highlighted Matters for Follow Up". The 20 page document is retained for reference and identifying appropriate treatment options by identified stakeholders or the Taskforce as a whole.

A Survey Monkey process was completed with 6 key questions being raised for feedback on overall exercise concept, value, timing, clarity, relevance and continuance.

Feedback from the survey was very positive overall with approximately 75% of respondents scoring outcomes in the top two categories. An example being: "How valuable did you find the exercise from a content and learning point of view?". 31.25% responded that it was extremely valuable and 43.75% very valuable.

All survey responses and comments have also been retained for reference when planning the next exercise to be conducted around September 2016.

9. Future Direction

It was generally accepted that this exercise was the first in what is to be an annual activity for industry and agencies in the Latrobe Valley, to further embed the integrated approach to emergency management.

A commitment was made by those present to continue to process into the future and to expand upon the complexity to develop and enhance major incident planning, response and recovery capability. Furthermore, that future exercises be broadened and more complex in terms of involving the State Control Centre, to practice for significant incidents, that have potential severe impacts on critical infrastructure failure consequences.

At the immediate conclusion to the exercise, a small workshop was conducted by an AFAC consultant representative with industry representatives. This was to confirm industries willingness and commitment to becoming a formal part of the AIIMS structure for the management of major incidents that have the potential or do impact industry. The outcomes of which are to be applied in the development of the AIIMS 5 doctrine that is due for release in March 2017.

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