

# From The Chief Officer.....



Number 108

“Our mission is to protect lives and property”

21th February 2014

## **Hazelwood Mine Fire-Hazmat Event**

CFA continue to have a large number of resources on the frontline and in support roles at the Hazelwood open cut mine. The emphasis remains on safety, adherence to the health monitoring process in place, the health and welfare of local communities and the prevention of lateral fire spread in the coal batters. There are currently around 200 CFA and MFB firefighters, 80 mine staff, 30 incident management team personnel and nine medical monitoring personnel involved. There was increased fire activity overnight with some spot-overs causing grass fires outside the mine. These were extinguished quickly and effectively. Specialist mine personnel overseeing the use of water report that it is currently within acceptable operating limits.

Levels of smoke in and around the Latrobe Valley vary depending on the weather. The Morwell area is feeling the most serious effects when there are light south-westerly winds or no winds to disperse the smoke. Air quality is being monitored by the EPA, emergency services and Hazmat technicians. Both fine particles and carbon monoxide are measured as indicators of the impact of smoke on local air quality. Monitoring will continue over the coming weeks to minimise any risks to communities and firefighters. Smoke haze in the valley is expected to continue for some time.

A Community Health Assessment Centre opened today at the Ambulance Victoria Gippsland Regional Office to provide information about the health impacts and offers basic health assessments. CFA and other agencies continue to keep the community informed over the coming days and weeks. Information will continue to be dropped in letterboxes in the southern part of Morwell and other key locations, available at CFA's static information bus in Elgin Street Morwell and through mobile education unit visits throughout the day in the area. [A respite centre at Moe Town Hall](#) is open daily from 9am to 7pm.

A range of information is available through multiple avenues:

- For community information venues, locations and times call VBIL on 1800 240 667 or Latrobe City Council on 1300 367 700
- For general situation information visit [cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au) or call VBIL
- [Information about health](#) - Anyone with concerns about their health should seek medical advice or call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24.
- [Information on air quality](#) or by calling 1300 372 842 (1300 EPAVIC).
- [Information on relief and recovery](#) including emergency financial assistance from the Victorian and Commonwealth government.
- People affected by fires can contact the Red Cross on 1800 727 077
- DEPI Animal Health staff have been visiting fire-affected properties to assess animal welfare needs and fence damage and help landowners.
- [A range of mine fire information from CFA News and Media](#)
- [Department of Health – Smoke in the Latrobe Valley](#)
- [Emergency Relief and Recovery Victoria](#)
- [Emergency school and early childhood centre closures](#)

## **Statewide Situation – Other fires of Significance**

Around the rest of the State there are three significant going bushfires in East Gippsland and a grass and scrub fire in Werona. It is positive and pleasing to note that management of the Yallourn mine fire has been handed back to local control. Victorian emergency services will continue to provide support.

*“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen”*

*- Winston Churchill*