

EPA Media Release



EPA launches Hazelwood open cut mine fire community website

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EPA Victoria has given residents impacted by the Hazelwood open cut mine fire direct access to important air quality monitoring data on a new, dedicated site <http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/aq-latrobe-valley-mine-fire>

EPA CEO John Merritt said there were color-coded hourly air quality bulletins for Morwell and Traralgon so people could clearly see when conditions changed.

“We’ve monitored the Valley for years but stepped it up for this incident to offer the community assurance of what we’re seeing in terms of particles and carbon monoxide,” Mr Merritt said.

“Some people want the raw data and others need the narrative, so the combination of graphics, numbers and color-coding will help it all mean something so you can protect yourself when conditions get worse.”

Each pollutant is recorded differently, such as parts per million for carbon monoxide, parts per billion for sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide, and particles at micrograms per cubic meter.

“Because the pollutants have different units of measure, our data readings are converted into an air quality index (AQI) values, based on a formula, so that we can compare and present this information,” Mr Merritt said.

“This is why, when EPA presents raw data on the webpage, it should not be taken as an indexed value – you’re not comparing apples to apples.”

EPA now has air monitoring stations fanned across the Latrobe Valley giving us an increasingly broad view and predictive ability.

“We know we’re at the mercy of the weather, so when the wind changes direction and blows that smoke plume over Morwell and Traralgon, we’re better at getting that alert out to the community,” Mr Merritt said.

“Check the website for hourly air quality updates and listen to local radio for information from the emergency services on what action to take to protect yourself when the smoke becomes intense.”

In addition to the new community website, EPA science and pollution officers will be at the respite centres to offer more information.

“We’re here, in Morwell and Traralgon, for the long haul,” Mr Merritt said.

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