

Community Information Newsletter

Cobden-Camperdown Peat Fires

Friday 6th April 2018

Important Information

Weather conditions over the coming days are being monitored closely, but have already increased the smoke impacts in nearby communities.

Forecasts show conditions on Saturday 7th April, are expected to deteriorate further, with reconsiderations to change location or postpone public events at Cobden.

The Incident Controller, Environment Protection Authority and Department of Health and Human Services are strongly encouraging community members to stay away from areas affected by the smoke on Saturday and Sunday.

If leaving the area, you should attend the Terang Relief Centre to complete an absence of residence form, which should be handed to police anytime between 9am to 5pm at the relief centre.

Warnings and Advice messages

1 Warnings have been issued for poor air quality in the areas of, Elingamite, and Elingamite North.

Three Advice Messages have been issued for poor air quality in Camperdown, Cobden, Cobrico, Elingamite and Elingamite North

1 Community Notification

Up-to-date messages can be found at:

www.emergency.vic.gov.au

Listen to Local ABC radio and check the VicEmergency App. VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226 for general information.

For Relief and Recovery visit:

https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief#outhwest_fires_march_2018

Health & Safety

Smoke from peat fires can affect people's health. People with heart or lung conditions (including asthma), children, pregnant women and those over 65 years of age are more sensitive to the effects of breathing in smoke from fires. People with existing heart or lung conditions (including asthma) should follow the treatment plan advised their doctor.

If you or anyone in your care is experiencing symptoms that may be due to smoke exposure, you can visit the Community Health Assessment Centre based out of the **Terang Relief Centre (Terang Civic Hall, 129 Mary Bradshaw Avenue)**, call **NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24** or seek medical advice. Call **000** in an emergency.



Billy Briggs and Shu Brown talk about the importance of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage as part of the response to the peat fires in the South West. Keep an eye out for their live interview which can be found on the Vic Emergency Facebook page, and also CFA South West Facebook page.

Information Point

Come and say Hi to Country Fire Authority, the big red bus is set up out front of the Uniting Church, 61 Curdie Street, Cobden.



Air quality is continually being monitored for the areas of Cobrico, Elingamite and Elingamite North. Up-to-date air quality information can be found at EPA Air Watch:

www.epa.vic.go.au/epaairwatch



Cleaning a smoke affected home

It is difficult to air out your home during smoky conditions. Whenever there is a break in smoky conditions, ventilate your home. Open up windows and doors. Sunlight and fresh air will help to remove the odour.

As a precaution wipe down surfaces with mild soap or detergent and water, especially when preparing food.

If anyone in your household is experiencing any health effects from the smoky conditions seek medical advice.

Washing smoke affected clothing

Wash smoke affected clothing and other linen as normal.

As a suggestion, consider drying washed items indoors, at a friend's place outside of the smoky environment, or at a laundromat.

Not all Face Masks are the Same

Ordinary paper dust masks, handkerchiefs or bandannas can help but do not protect you from fine smoke particles or carbon monoxide.

Masks are available at the Health Assessment Centre at Terang Civic Hall. P2 masks don't provide complete protection. They do not remove or protect against carbon monoxide.

P2 masks are to be used for a maximum of 4 hours or until they become damp. Fitted properly,

a P2 mask can filter out some of the fine particles from smoke. Particulate matter is being monitored by EPA at their incident air monitoring stations. PM2.5 particles are smaller than 2.5 micrometres and they are up to 30 times smaller than the width of a human hair.

Livestock & Pets

The health and safety of animals is also important. While most livestock are resilient to peat fire impacts; dogs, cats and horses are more sensitive. Watch out for eye irritation and respiratory problems, if concerned please contact your local vet, you also may wish to consider relocating animals.

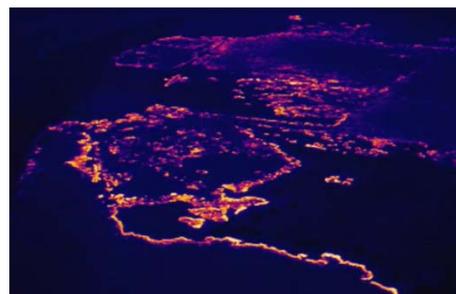
Peat Fire Update

Firefighters are continuing to work hard to extinguish the peat fires with a focus on Cobrico, Lake Elingamite and Lake Bullen-Merri.

Specialist firefighting vehicles are being utilised at this fire. Compressed Air Foam System (CAFs) equipment from the Latrobe Valley and Tasmania and 2 Airport Tenders are currently being used. These vehicles have the capacity to pump larger quantities of water from a further distance.

Community members around the peat fires near Cobrico, Lake Bullen Merri and Lake Elingamite should continue to stay informed about the risks of peat fire smoke and what it means for them.

Above ground piping network is being installed from a number of nearby sources to significantly increase water capacity and suppression activities. Sprinkler systems will also be in place to further enhance operations



Thermal Imaging showing the heat underground from the peat fires

PERSONAL WELFARE

It is normal to have strong emotional or physical reactions after an emergency – these feelings are part of the healing process.

Do you know someone who may be struggling or showing signs of distress following the bushfires in Victoria's south west? Signs can include them reliving the traumatic event, feeling angry, afraid, or even numb. Please don't ignore the warning signs. The sooner they receive treatment, the better the outcome is likely to be. Encourage the person to see a doctor for or make your own appointment with a doctor to discuss your concerns and find out what help is available.

For local Community Health Services - South West Healthcare provides specialist mental health services to South Western Victoria:

Phone: 5561 9100 / **Website:** southwesthealthcare

Visit www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief for information on coping with trauma in recovery.

Emergencies put a lot of additional stress on close relationships and families as they struggle to deal with the aftermath. People who have never been violent or controlling may find themselves behaving in ways they didn't before; or existing violent behaviour may start to increase or escalate. If you, or someone you know, need help there are services you can call, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. **Phone: 1800 015 188** (free call within Victoria) Web: www.safestep.org.au