

# Health impacts and proximity to smoke

Updated on 11 April, 2018

Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has developed this document to assist community members around Cobrico, Elingamite and Elingamite North to understand risks of smoke from wood and peat fires and what it means for them.

Like wood smoke, peat smoke produces fine particles. Peat smoke differs from normal wood smoke because it can produce larger volumes of carbon monoxide as well as oxides of sulphur and nitrogen. Because of this, when peat burns it produces gases that have a distinct acrid smell and can be irritating.

## Key changes as of 11 April 2018

Residents in the 1km radius were advised to relocate due to very high Carbon Monoxide (CO) concentrations due to the peat fires. The CO concentrations are now very low, and even though particulate concentrations can be elevated within close proximities to the peat fires, **we feel the levels are now low enough, for both CO and particulates, to return home.** It should be noted the CO levels have been very low for a number of days.

Despite this advice to return home and an improvement in air quality, sensitive residents such as those with a pre-existing illness or sensitivity (i.e. young children, those above 65 years old, pregnant) still need to be vigilant, follow their health plan and stay indoors when they see or smell smoke. In smoky conditions exercise should be avoided.

The air pollutant concentrations around Cobden township are also very good. All residents need to be aware of their surroundings and take measures when they see or smell smoke. Spend time indoors when there is smoke, wherever possible.

Residents are asked to keep themselves informed and look at the EPA AirWatch site and visit [emergency.vic.gov.au](http://emergency.vic.gov.au) for updated information.

Visit [www.emergency.vic.gov.au](http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au) for updates on air quality information and what actions you need to take. Air quality information is also available at the EPA AirWatch website [www.epa.vic.gov.au/EPAAirWatch](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/EPAAirWatch).

## What should I do if I am concerned about my health?

With the improvements in air quality, and very low Carbon Monoxide levels, the free community health assessment centre will remain in place until Friday 13 April (between 8am to 8pm), at the Terang Relief Centre, 129 High Street, Terang. These assessment services will then shift to local health services.

If you are concerned about your health, or wish to get your carbon monoxide levels checked, you can visit Cobden, Terang or Camperdown hospitals from 8pm Friday 13 April.

For access to local emotional support services please call South West Healthcare on **5563 4000** or **5232 5180**. They are offering free, confidential, professional support to individuals or families who have been impacted by the recent fires regardless of where you are located. No GP referral is required.

**For health advice and support you can call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24, visit your GP for medical advice, visit your local health service or dial Triple Zero in an emergency.**

### **Animals and smoke advice**

Animals including livestock generally tolerate smoke (and ash fallout) from exposure to a smoke plume; however some animals, particularly pets and horses, may exhibit minor respiratory problems or eye irritation.

Every property and species is different and the levels of smoke exposure will vary from day to day depending on the prevailing wind. The open-air environment of grazing enterprises is not expected to allow the build-up of gases.

Where safe to do so, it is recommended that livestock should be moved away from the active smoke plume. Veterinary advice should be sought if animal owners are concerned that their animals are being affected by smoke or ash.

### **Carbon Monoxide monitors**

With EPA confirming air quality levels have improved and are very unlikely to impact people's health, Carbon Monoxide Monitors can be returned to the Warrnambool CFA office, corner Raglan Parade and Walsh Road, Warrnambool.

Community members may also hold onto them if they wish, and return them at a later date to the Warrnambool CFA office.

### **Where can I find more information?**

- Current information and advice is available on the VicEmergency website including important information about recovery support services: [http://emergency.vic.gov.au/relief/#local\\_support\\_services](http://emergency.vic.gov.au/relief/#local_support_services)
- Keeping up to date with warnings and community newsletters produced by the local Incident Control Centre, which are available at [www.emergency.vic.gov.au](http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au) or at local relief centres.
- Checking the EPA website for general information on Smoke and Your Health at [www.epa.vic.gov.au/your-environment/air/smoke](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/your-environment/air/smoke).
- Keeping an eye on local council websites and social media channels, including Facebook

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