Community Information Newsletter
March 25th 2018

Community Meeting Tonight

Cobden Relief Centre

4:30pm

53 – 55 Victoria Street

Cobden

Smoke from a Peat Fire

Peat fires can smoulder for a long time and can be difficult to put out and can emit a number of toxic gases.

Smoke contains fine particles, water vapour and gases including carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxides. The amount of smoke that can be seen does not indicate the level of gases that may be present in the air.

People with heart or lung conditions, including asthma, children (up to 14 years), pregnant women and people over 65 years of age are more sensitive to the effects of breathing in smoke, and rest as much as possible.

Prolonged exposure to carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide can be hazardous up to 3km downwind of peat fires.

INCIDENT INFORMATION

The four major fires in the south west at Terang, Camperdown, Gazette and Garvoc, are contained and have burnt through a total area of around 15,000 hectares. Losses include 24 houses and 63 sheds, hundreds of livestock, pasture and silage.

Victoria Police have reported on the cause of each of the fires:

Penshurst / Gazette fire – tree in bluegum plantation fell onto power lines, bringing them to the ground igniting the surrounding vegetation.

Terang –Cobden fire – the largest of the south west fires a result of power lines being brought down by high winds and igniting the vegetation below.

Gavoc: – caused by snapping power line in high winds and falling to the ground. Electrical arcs then ignited the vegetation below.

Gnotuk fire: - again caused by tree limb falling across power lines.

Air Pollution Concentrations and EPA's role

Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) has had mobile air quality monitoring stations at the towns of Cobden, Camperdown and Terang since Tuesday, 20 March, and has now added two more in the Cobrico area.

EPA's air quality monitoring stations track levels of Carbon Monoxide (CO); a clear, odourless gas that is produced in higher quantities by peat fires than by ordinary bushfires. Generally Carbon Monoxide can be expelled from our bodies by moving into areas of fresh air.

They also monitor the levels of particulate matter (PM). PM2.5 describes fine particles with a diameter smaller than 2.5 micrometres, that is up to 30 times smaller than the width of a human hair. PM2.5 can affect the lungs if inhaled in sufficient concentrations and is dangerous for person's health.

Data from the stations shows that CO levels and PM2.5 levels and are monitored by EPA.

Having continuous access to accurate scientific data on air quality helps the Incident Controller to make better informed decisions on actions to ensure the wellbeing of members of the public, firefighters and other personnel in the area.

Mobile air quality monitoring stations from Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) will continue to support the firefighting and community recovery efforts under way in South West Victoria for as long as they are needed.

If you would like to see Please refer to the EPA AirWatch or the VicEmergency website for current information about air quality. For more information about peat fire smoke and how to stay safe visit:

If members of the community are concerned about their possible exposure to carbon monoxide, they can visit the Terang Civic Hall for a free health assessment, or call Nurse-On-Call on 1300 60 60 24 for medical advice. Call 000 in an emergency.

EMERGENCY RELIEF CENTRES

Various support services are available at:
Terang Civic Hall, 129 Mary Bradshaw Avenue (open 24 hours)
Cobden: Cobden Civic Hall, 53-55 Victoria Street (open 9am - 5pm)

COMMUNITY INFORMATION POINTS

Community Information Points will be operating at Penshurst Memorial Hall, 21 Martin St, Penshurst and Garvoc Community Hall, Main Road, Garvoc (open 10am – 5pm)

STAY INFORMED

Check for the latest warnings and advice messages at www.emergency.vic.gov.au or the VicEmergency smartphone app, or your local emergency radio station or contact the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226.

Tune in to ABC Local Radio, commercial and designated community radio stations, or Sky News TV.
People who are deaf, hard of hearing, or who have a speech/communication impairment can contact VicEmergency Hotline via the National Relay Service on 1800 555 677.

For help with English, call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 (freecall) and ask them to telephone VicEmergency Hotline. If you know someone who cannot speak English, provide them with this number.

HEALTH INFORMATION

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide is a colourless and odourless gas. It is found in smoke and is formed from the incomplete combustion of fuels such as peat.

When breathed in, carbon monoxide displaces oxygen in the blood and deprives the heart, brain and other vital organs of oxygen. Carbon monoxide may cause “flu-like” symptoms such as headache and tiredness, progressing to dizziness, confusion, nausea or fainting.

If you have concerns about your health you should seek medical advice, visit Terang Civic Hall for a free health assessment or call Nurse-On-Call on 1300 606 024. Anyone experiencing difficulty breathing or chest pain should seek urgent medical assistance phone 000.

SMOKE AND AIR MONITORING

EPA continues to undertake air quality assessments around affected areas.
For information on how smoke from bushfires can affect your health call Nurse-on-Call on 1300 60 60 24 (this is a phone service that allows you to discuss any health-related issue with a registered nurse, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for the cost of a local call from anywhere in Victoria).

For more information about peat fires and carbon monoxide visit www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief

FIRES

Smoke may be visible from nearby communities and roads. Please do not ring 000 unless you see flames.

ROAD INFORMATION

Roads are open to local traffic and residents are permitted to return. Further information is available via 13 11 70 or the VicRoads website https://traffic.vicroads.vic.gov.au

AFTER THE FIRES

Relief and recovery information is available at www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief or call VicEmergency on 1800 226 226.

If you are unsure about your safety around your home, contact council for Property Impact Assessment

STOCK LOSSES

Contact Agriculture Victoria on 5336 6721.

VICTORIAN FARMERS FEDERATION SUPPORT AND DISASTER RELIEF

For donations of fodder, provision of generators, and need for agistment contact 1300 882 833

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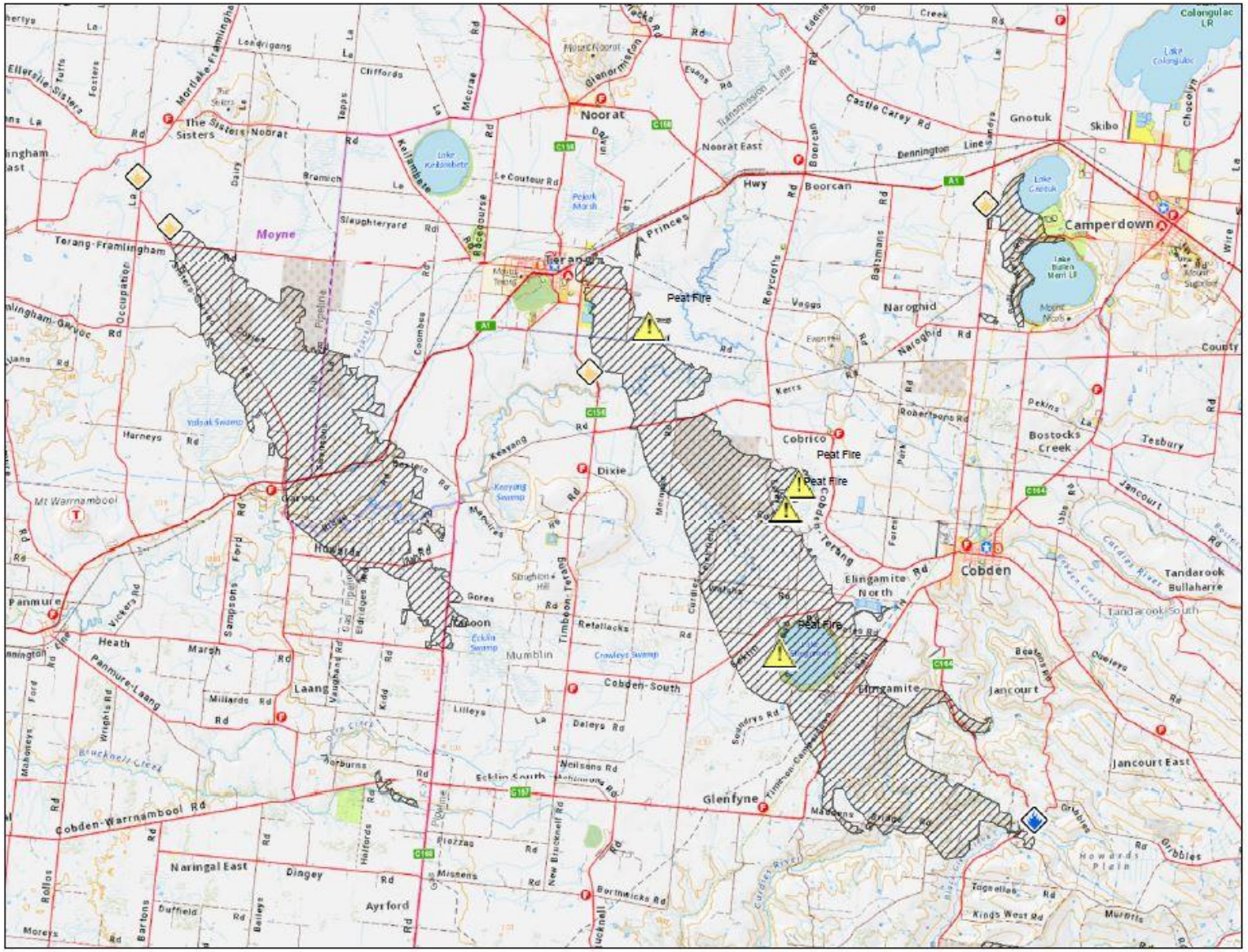
SouthWest Fire Locations - 24 March 2018

Public Information Map


Noorat
Camperdown
Cobden
Peat Fire
Peat Fire
Peat Fire
Peat Fire
Moyne
Naroghid
Cobrico
Dixie
Mumblin
Glenfyne
Timboon-Terang
Cobden-Warrnambool Rd
Princes Hwy
Beorcan
Castle Carey Rd
Noorat East
Gnotuk
Skibo
Naroghid Rd
Cobden-South
Elingamite
Elingamite North
Jancourt
Jancourt East
Tandarook
Bullaharre
Tandarook South
Bostocks Creek
Tesbury
Pekins
Robertsons Rd
Cobden-Terang
Torang-Framlingham
Mt Warrnambool
Panmure
Heath Marsh
Panmure-Laang
Laang
Naringal East
Dingey
Ayrford
Cobden-Warrnambool Rd
Gnotuk
Skibo
Colongulac LR
Lake Colongulac
Lake Gnotuk
Lake Bullen Merri LR
Mount Noorat
Mount Sugarloaf
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