

Health impacts and proximity to smoke

30th March, 2018

The Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) and the Department of Health and Human Services has developed this document to explain possible health impacts for community members, based on their proximity to peat smoke at Cobrico and Lake Elingamite.

Visit 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/EPAirWatch.

The two key risks from exposure to peat smoke are carbon monoxide and particles. Within 1km of the source of peat smoke, these are both a risk if you are in the smoke plume. Outside this 1km radius, the main risk is particles, which can travel long distances.

Anyone within 1km of a peat smoke plume is encouraged to relocate to stay with family and friends and to take precautionary actions when returning to visit their property or care for animals.

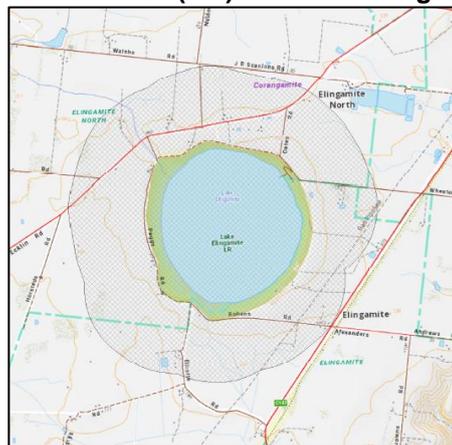
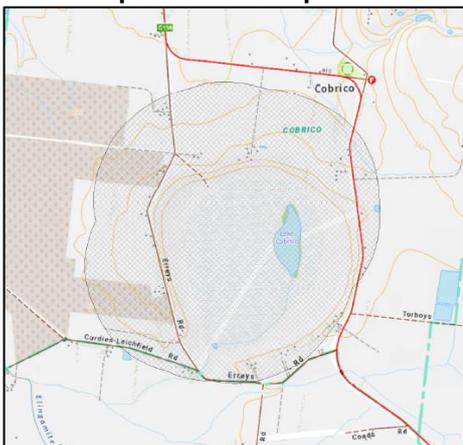
Regular testing for carbon monoxide levels is also recommended if you are living within the 1km zone at the Community Health Assessment Centre at the Terang Relief Centre, located at the Terang Civic Hall at 129 Mary Bradshaw Avenue.

If you are concerned about your health you can also call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24, visit your local medical practitioner - or in an emergency, call Triple Zero.

There are also several ways community members can access information, including:

- Visit Terang Relief Centre, Terang Civic Hall, 129 Mary Bradshaw Ave; Terang,
- Calling the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226 for updated incident information as well as access to support services.
- Keeping up to date with community newsletters produced by the local Incident Control Centre, which are available at 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.
- Keeping an eye on local council websites and social media channels, including Facebook.

Possible peat smoke exposure zones – 1km from Cobrico (left) and Lake Elingamite (right)



| Proximity to smoke plume | Vulnerable Young (children up to 16 years), aged (adults over 64 years), pregnant, pre-existing health conditions including heart conditions, respiratory conditions (such as asthma), blood conditions (such as anaemia), cancer, smokers | Normal health |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Within 1km | <p>What you may experience:</p> <p>Peat smoke differs from normal wood smoke because of what is in the peat and how it burns.</p> <p>Peat smoke produces gases that have a distinct acrid smell and can be irritating.</p> <p>Smoke may cause:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Itchy eyes • Sore throat • Runny nose • Coughing • May also aggravate existing heart and lung conditions <p>Carbon monoxide may cause headaches and tiredness progressing to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dizziness • Confusion • Nausea • Fainting <p>General smoke precautionary actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is advised that you relocate to stay with family and friends. • Remember to take your pets with you, enough clothes for a number of days, any medications and prescriptions. • When returning avoid all outdoor physical activity. • If you have remained at your property you should take a break from the smoke by visiting a friend or relative outside the smoke-affected area. • Anyone with a heart or lung condition should take their medication as prescribed by their doctor. • People with asthma should follow their asthma management plan. • If you do return to visit your property switch air-conditioners to recirculate. If they do not have that function, turn them off. Try to take an air-conditioned break elsewhere if it is safe to do so and your home is uncomfortable. • Reduce activities that affect indoor air quality, like smoking cigarettes, burning candles or vacuuming. • Anyone working within the 1km zone is encouraged to move away from visibly smoky areas or leave the area until it is declared safe. | <p>What you may experience:</p> <p>Peat smoke differs from normal wood smoke because of what is in the peat and how it burns.</p> <p>Peat smoke produces gases that have a distinct acrid smell and can be irritating.</p> <p>Smoke may cause:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Itchy eyes • Sore throat • Runny nose • Coughing <p>Carbon monoxide may cause headaches and tiredness progressing to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dizziness • Confusion • Nausea • Fainting <p>General smoke precautionary actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is advised that you relocate to stay with family and friends. • Remember to take your pets with you, enough clothes for a number of days, any medications and prescriptions. • When returning avoid all outdoor physical activity. • If you have remained at your property you should take a break from the smoke by visiting a friend or relative outside the smoke-affected area. • Anyone experiencing symptoms which may be due to smoke exposure should consider taking a break away from the smoky conditions. • If you do return to your property switch air-conditioners to recirculate. If they do not have that function, turn them off. • Reduce activities that affect indoor air quality, like smoking cigarettes, burning candles or vacuuming. • Anyone working within the 1km zone is encouraged to move away from visibly smoky areas or leave the area until it is declared safe. |

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|---------------------------------|--|--|
| | <p>Carbon monoxide risks and actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carbon monoxide builds up gradually in the human body over a period of hours. It is also gradually removed from the body after exposure stops. This is why there are times when you are being asked to relocate, but you can return to your property during the daytime. Overnight conditions can be uncertain. • Anyone within 1km of the peat smoke plume is encouraged to get regular testing for carbon monoxide levels at the Community Health Assessment Centre at the Terang Relief Centre, Terang Civic Hall, 129 Mary Bradshaw Avenue. • Remember regular paper dust masks, handkerchiefs or bandannas do not protect you from fine smoke particles or gases. It is also important to note that particulate matter face masks (eg: P2 masks) will not protect against carbon monoxide exposure. • If you are within a visibly smoky area it is advised that you relocate until the area clears. <p>Seek medical advice if you feel unwell, are concerned, or are experiencing the above symptoms.</p> <p>See bottom of information sheet for advice on animals</p> | <p>Carbon monoxide risks and actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carbon monoxide builds up gradually in the human body over a period of hours. It is also gradually removed from the body after exposure stops. This is there are times when you are being asked to relocate, but you can return to your property during the daytime. Overnight conditions can be uncertain. • Anyone within 1km of the peat smoke plume is encouraged to get regular testing for carbon monoxide levels at the Community Health Assessment Centre at the Terang Relief Centre, Terang Civic Hall, 129 Mary Bradshaw Avenue. • Remember regular paper dust masks, handkerchiefs or bandannas do not protect you from fine smoke particles or gases. It is also important to note that particulate matter face masks (eg: P2 masks) will not protect against carbon monoxide exposure. • If you are within a visibly smoky area it is advised that you relocate until the area clears. <p>Seek medical advice if you feel unwell, are concerned, or are experiencing the above symptoms.</p> <p>See bottom of information sheet for advice on animals</p> |
| Within 1-6km | <p>What you may experience:</p> <p>Smoke may cause:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Itchy eyes • Sore throat • Runny nose • Coughing • May also aggravate existing heart and lung conditions <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid all outdoor physical activity. • Anyone with a heart or lung condition should take their medication as prescribed by their doctor. • People with asthma should follow their asthma management plan. • Switch air-conditioners to recirculate. If they do not have that function, turn them off. Try to take an air-conditioned break elsewhere if it is safe to do so and your home is uncomfortable. • Reduce activities that affect indoor air quality, like smoking cigarettes, burning candles or vacuuming. <p>See bottom of information sheet for advice on animals</p> | <p>What you may experience:</p> <p>Smoke may cause:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Itchy eyes • Sore throat • Runny nose • Coughing <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid all outdoor physical activity. • Switch air-conditioners to recirculate. If they do not have that function, turn them off. Try to take an air-conditioned break elsewhere if it is safe to do so and your home is uncomfortable. • Reduce activities that affect indoor air quality, like smoking cigarettes, burning candles or vacuuming. <p>See bottom of information sheet for advice on animals</p> |

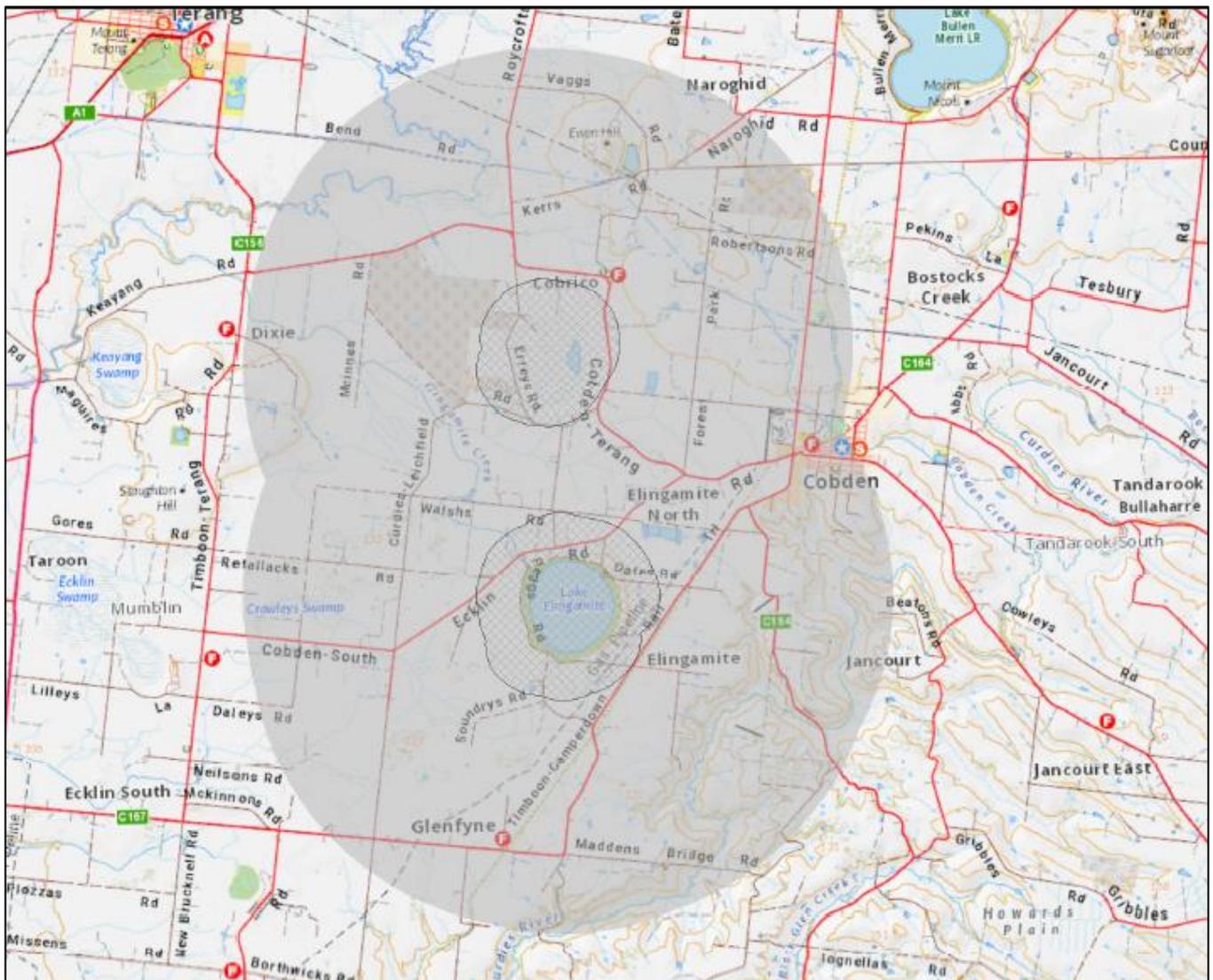
Animals and smoke advice

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.

Possible peat smoke exposure zone up to 6km from Cobrico and Lake Elingamite



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Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

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