

Strathdownie Kaladbro Road Peat Bog Fire

25 November 2015

On 7 November a peat bog fire was reported at the Kaladbro Swamp approximately 30km north-west of Dartmoor in South West Victoria. The fire appears to be the result of a lightning strike to a fence which ignited peat in a 400 hectare drained peat swamp. Containment works have been undertaken to restrict the spread of the fire. This includes constructing a trench around the perimeter of the fire area.

The Department of Health and Human Services has prepared the following information to address community health concerns about potential exposure to smoke from this fire.

What is in the smoke?

Peat bog smoke is a complex mixture characterised by high concentrations of organic carbon, elemental carbon, potassium and sulphur. The contents of smoke from peat bog fires may vary but peat bog fires have the potential to produce contaminants which may be similar to bushfire smoke such as carbon monoxide and fine particles. It is important to avoid smoke exposure wherever possible.

The CFA are continuing to monitor carbon monoxide at the site.

What are the immediate health effects of smoke exposure?

Exposure to fine particles and other chemicals in fires occurs by breathing in the smoke. The immediate health effects of smoke exposure include irritation of the eyes, nose or throat. Healthy adults who have a short exposure to smoke usually find these symptoms clear up once they are away from the smoke.

Exposure to higher levels of smoke may cause persistent cough, wheezing and breathing difficulties.

People most likely to experience effects are those with heart or lung conditions including asthma. Smoke can worsen these conditions. Older adults, children and pregnant women may also be sensitive to smoke exposure.

Anyone with heart or lung conditions should take their medication as prescribed by their doctor. People with asthma should follow their asthma management plan.

Where can I get more information?

- Anyone with concerns about their health should seek medical advice or call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24.
- Anyone experiencing wheezing, chest tightness and difficulty breathing should call 000.
- For fire information ring the Victorian Bushfire Information Line 1800 240 667 or visit the Vic Emergency Website at www.emergency.vic.gov.au.
- For further information about active fire incidents www.cfa.vic.gov.au

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