

Hazelwood coal mine fire: Ash residue in Morwell roof cavities project

Community update No. 10 – April 2017

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has prepared the following information to provide an update on the 'Ash residue in Morwell roof cavities' project since March 2017. This will be the final project update.

About the project

The Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry recommended that the government collect and test any ash that may have settled in the roof cavities of houses in Morwell, publish the results of that analysis to the community and provide advice about any potential known or unknown health effects (Recommendation 9, Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry Report III).

The 'Ash residue in Morwell roof cavities' project addresses this recommendation. It has also helped government agencies to better understand the community's concerns about ash in roof cavities through community forums and feedback.

DHHS is leading the project, working closely with the community, Latrobe City Council and the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria.

Project updates

Final project report

Senversa is in the process of preparing the final project report. At a stakeholder meeting with the executive board of the Latrobe Health Assembly in March 2017, it was recommended by the Board that the draft report be peer reviewed by an additional independent expert. Because of the additional time required to complete the peer-review, the final report is now expected in May 2017.

This further external, independent review helps ensure that the project has been completed in the best way possible, and that the results are consistent and reliable.

User-friendly summary

Based on feedback at the January 2017 community forums, DHHS is preparing a user-friendly summary of the final report. We want to assist the community to have a good understanding about the project and its findings.

The user-friendly summary report will take the technical information about the project and Senversa's conclusions and recommendations and present the findings in a way that is easier to read and understand.

How can I get a copy of the report?

Anyone who has registered to receive project updates will be sent an executive summary of the final report (prepared by Senversa) and the user-friendly summary (prepared by DHHS).

Hard copies of the executive summary and user-friendly reports will also be available via local community groups and community hubs, such as the library, RSL, and council offices.

All project materials including the full report and summary report will be published on the project web page at: www.health.vic.gov.au/ash-project

Information on how to obtain a copy of the report will also be provided in the local newspaper.

Anyone can request a copy of the full final report and summary reports by:

- emailing ashproject@dhhs.vic.gov.au
- phoning 1300 761 874
- returning the request form included with the summary report
- completing the online form or downloading a request form on the project page at: www.health.vic.gov.au/ash-project

Thanks for being part of the project

This will be the final project update for the Ash residue in Morwell roof cavities project, as the final report will be published in May 2017.

The project team would like to thank everyone who participated in the project through registering to receive these updates, volunteering your house for sampling, and taking part in community forums to providing feedback.

Your contributions have helped to improve our understanding of the issue and to shape the project to meet the needs of the community.



We encourage you to continue to engage in local activities and welcome your ongoing participation in future projects.

More information

Department of Health and Human Services

Community updates and resources published during the implementation of the project will remain on a dedicated project page at: www.health.vic.gov.au/ash-project

Questions about the project can be directed to: ashproject@dhhs.vic.gov.au or 1300 761 874.

The answers to past community questions are available in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) at: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/emergencies/hazelwood/ash-project-faq>

Stay up to date with social media:

- Twitter: @VicGovDHHS #MorwellAshProject
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/VicGovHealth

EPA Victoria

For more information about the EPA's environmental monitoring program in Morwell and surrounding areas call EPA on 1300 372 842 or visit <http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/hazelwood>

Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry

For more information on the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry visit www.hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au

Senversa

More information about Senversa is available at www.senversa.com.au

To receive this publication in an accessible format phone 1300 761 874, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email environmental.healthunit@dhhs.vic.gov.au

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Project timeline

February 2014	Hazelwood coal mine fire burned for at least 45 days until 10 March 2014.
March 2014	Hazelwood Mine Fire Board of Inquiry established.
May 2015	Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry reopened.
February 2016	<i>Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry Report 2015/2016 Volume III – Health Improvement</i> (Inquiry Report III) tabled in the Parliament of Victoria. This report includes Recommendation 9, relating to the Ash residue in Morwell roof cavities project.
April 2016	The Victorian Premier and Minister for Health announced that the Government had accepted all recommendations from Inquiry Report III, including the testing and analysis of ash residue in roof cavities, on 15 April 2016.
May 2016	The 2016-17 Budget allocated funding to support the implementation of the recommendations in Inquiry Report III (including Recommendation 9).
June 2016	Planning was underway to implement the project, including the development of a dedicated website and generic email address to facilitate the recruitment of houses for testing, and engagement of an independent expert.
July 2016	The procurement process to engage an independent expert closed on 22 July 2016.
August 2016	The successful independent expert (Senversa) was engaged via a DHHS contract. Contracts are published on www.tenders.vic.gov.au .
September 2016	Community forums were held in Morwell. Senversa developed the <i>Sampling and Analytical Quality Plan</i> that sets out how houses were selected for testing. Senversa began collecting samples in Morwell in late-September 2016.
October 2016	Senversa finished collecting samples from all of the 50 selected houses in Morwell.
November 2016	Senversa began collecting samples from the control site in Rosedale in late-November. Samples from Morwell were tested via Victorian laboratories.
December 2016	Senversa provided preliminary results of the testing for Morwell only. Sampling was completed in Rosedale and those samples were tested. Senversa analysed and compared the results.
January 2017	Community forums were held in Morwell to discuss the final results and possible next steps. Senversa started visiting people whose houses were tested to discuss the results and provide a report to each household that was involved.
February 2017	Senversa completed individual visits with people whose houses were tested.
March 2017	The project team shared the results of sampling with the executive board of the Latrobe Health Assembly who recommended a peer-review of Senversa's draft final report. The peer review undertaken by another independent expert was completed in March 2017.
April 2017	Senversa revised the draft final report in response to the peer review. The department developed a user friendly summary of the report.
May 2017 onwards	The final report will be available in May 2017. All resources (community updates and reports) developed during the implementation of the project will remain on the dedicated web page.