

Broadmeadows tyre fire – smoke and your health

Community fact sheet January 2016

The Department of Health and Human Services has prepared the following information to address any community health concerns about potential exposure to smoke as a result of a tyre fire in Broadmeadows, which started on 11 January 2016. For further information about the progress of this fire stay tuned to your local emergency radio broadcaster.

Tyre fires

Tyres consist of rubber compound, reinforced with steel and textile.

Tyre fires can be hard to put out and typically produce a thick, black smoke that may take some time to disperse.

What will happen if I inhale the smoke?

Exposure to fine particles and most other chemicals in tyre fires occurs by inhaling the smoke. Smoke from tyre fires is particularly irritating. The immediate health effect following exposure is irritation of the eyes, nose and throat.

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

People with pre-existing heart or lung conditions (including asthma), children, pregnant women and those over 65 years of age are more sensitive to the effects of breathing in smoke.

If you have symptoms of concern or breathing difficulties call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24.

What should I do to avoid the smoke?

Avoid heavy or prolonged exercise and try to limit your time outdoors. This is especially true if you are in one of the sensitive groups listed above.

Could smoke exposure affect my health in the future?

If you inhale smoke without having any symptoms, no adverse health effects would be expected. Irritation to your eyes, nose or throat will go quickly after the fire is controlled. If not, seek medical advice.

If you were exposed to high levels of smoke from the tyre fire, breathing difficulties could develop or recur in the following 36 hours. Seek immediate medical help.

A single exposure to tyre smoke is not likely to cause long-term effects. The risk of exposure to chemicals in smoke is estimated to be small in comparison to everyday exposure to these chemicals from other sources.

What chemicals are released in smoke from tyre fires?

Tyre fires release large amounts of fine particles and in some cases sulphur dioxide. Other chemicals may include carbon monoxide, metals, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), volatile organic carbons (VOCs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), phenols, dioxins, chlorine and furans.

I am concerned about the health of my pet/s. What should I do?

Bring pets indoors with you. If you have any concerns about the health of your pets, take them to see a vet.

Further information

Vic Emergency

More information on active incidents involving hazardous materials is available at:
www.emergency.vic.gov.au

EPA Victoria

More information on the environmental impacts of tyre fires is available from EPA Victoria on 1300 372 842 (24 hours).

Local Government

For updates on clean-up activities at the site contact Hume City Council on 03 9205 2200 or visit their website at: <http://www.hume.vic.gov.au>

Department of Health and Human Services

For more information on the health effects of smoke call 1300 761 874 during business hours.



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