

Community Information Newsletter

Cobden-Camperdown Peat Fires

Thursday 26th April 2018

FINAL NEWSLETTER FROM THE INCIDENT CONTROL CENTRE

Reminder – the Incident Management Team advises its readers that this is the final newsletter to be issued from the Incident Control Centre.

Fire Recovery Newsletters containing information and updates will continue to be distributed by local councils.

Corangamite, Moyne and Southern Grampians Shire Councils will continue to provide newsletters and updates on recovery and rehabilitation. Each Shire has a wealth of information on their websites, ranging from recovery from a personal perspective (health and well-being, loss of personal documentation), issues relating to stock & wildlife health, pasture management and water quality, financial management and opportunities for people to donate. Details of their websites are:

Corangamite Shire Council:

<https://www.corangamite.vic.gov.au/Property/Emergency/South-West-Complex-Fire-March-2018>

Regular newsletters can be accessed from <https://www.corangamite.vic.gov.au/Property/Emergency/South-West-Complex-Fire-March-2018/Fire-Recovery-updates>

Moyne Shire Council:

<http://www.moyne.vic.gov.au/Emergencies/South-West-Fires-Recovery>

The Moyne Shire Recovery Plan and regular newsletters can also be accessed from this page.

Southern Grampians Shire Council

www.sthgrampians.vic.gov.au/Page/Page.aspx?Page_Id=2798

Contact your local council if you require further assistance in obtaining any of this documentation:

- Corangamite Shire (03) 5593 7100
- Moyne Shire Council 1300 656 564
- Southern Grampians Shire Council (03) 5573 0444

Fire Suppression activities

For any information regarding any fire suppression activities, contact the Incident Management Team now located at the Cobden Incident Control Centre (ICC) on (03) 5559 2345.

Following the Fires – Community Meetings

The three shires affected by the fires are planning a series of community meetings entitled “Following the fires”. Dates to be advised.

Fundraising Sale

There will be a fundraiser sale of surplus donated goods at the Cobden Uniting Church on Saturday 5th May commencing at 10 am. All proceeds from the sale will contribute to the Fire Recovery Appeal.

Financial Assistance / Advice

Disaster assistance – Financial assistance is available to eligible fire-affected community members. Please call your VicEmergency on 1800 226 226 for more information. www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief/.

To apply for a Clean or Restoration Grants contact Rural Finance on 1800 260 425 or visit <http://www.ruralfinance.com.au> for further information. Eligible primary producers are reminded to keep receipts for reimbursement purposes.

Assistance for small business – contact the Australian Taxation Office with all your queries: www.ato.gov.au/tax-professionals/your-practice/tax-and-bas-agents/natural-disasters/ or call 1800 806 218 to discuss how they can assist you.

Rural Financial Counselling Service – phone 1300 735 578.

Assistance with Stock & Pastures

Injured stock – Contact Agriculture Victoria on (03) 5336 6721

Stock feed – contact the VFF on 1300 882 833.

Pasture recovery – talk to an extension officer from Agriculture Victoria or WestVic Dairy about your situation.

A quick reference guide is also available at www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/firerecovery

Fencing and Control Line Rehabilitation – see www.ffm.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0016/21283/Repair-of-fences-damaged-by-bushfire-and-fire-control-line-rehabilitation-policy-2015.pdf

Rebuilding your fences – call Blaze Aid camp leaders directly:

Cobden: Chris & John Male,
0418 745 994 blazeaid.cobden@gmail.com

Terang: Vicki and Malcolm McIntosh
0437 817 330, blazeaid.terang@gmail.com

Warnings and Advice messages

There are currently two (2) community notifications in place for air quality in the areas of Cobrico, Elingamite, and Elingamite North.

Health and Wellbeing

Health checks are available from:

- Cobden Health, 5 Victoria Street Cobden
- Terang Hospital, 13 Austin Avenue Terang
- Camperdown Hospital, Robinson Street Camperdown

*A referral from your GP is not necessary

Do you still have a CO monitors in your possession?

Please return CO monitors to Betty Robilliard at the Cobden Fire Station (phone: (03) 5595 1395).

Local Emotional Support Services: Call South West Healthcare on (03) 5563 4000 or (03) 5232 5180.

Mental Health Concerns for yourself or others? Call Mental Health Services on 1800 808 284 (24 hours).

Other 24 hours helplines include:

Lifeline: 13 11 14 **Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800
Nurse on Call: 1800 022 222 **Mens Line:** 1300 78 9978

More helpful information is also available here:

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/trauma-reaction-and-recovery

Incident Situation and Update

How long does it take to extinguish a peat fire? Peat is an organic fuel consisting of spongy material formed by the partial decomposition of organic matter, primarily plant material, in wetlands such as swamps, bogs and lake beds.

Dried peat burns readily with a smoky flame and a characteristic odour. The ash is powdery and light with an orange colour when burnt with a high heat, except for varieties that have a high content of inorganic matter.

Because of this vast accumulation of fuel, once ignited, smouldering peat fires may potentially burn for very long periods of time (e.g. weeks, months, years) despite extensive rains, weather changes or fire-fighting attempts.

Thanks to the amazing efforts by all crews involved we are seeing some great results in getting on top of the peat fires in Lake Cobrico and Lake Elingamite.

There is still work to be done to fully extinguish these fires, which at this stage is mainly confined to a number of hot spots. Thank you to everyone involved particularly the

community members, for your assistance, understanding and patience. We understand how difficult this has been for many. We are here, and be assured we will remain here in some capacity until the job is done! To reflect our success in the fire and smoke suppression efforts, the Incident Control Centre (ICC) will be relocating from Warrnambool to Cobden on Friday 27 April to enable the Incident Management team to be closer to the firefighting operation and impacted communities. Additional portable buildings and infrastructure have been placed into the Cobden Fire Station to enable to the Incident Management Team (IMT) to work effectively from that location.

The IMT would also like to thank the Cobden community for their continued and ongoing support of both the crews based at the Staging Area in Cobden and the members of the IMT who will be located at the Cobden LCF on Station Street.

Air monitoring Carbon Monoxide (CO) monitoring results from the three Environment Protection Authority (EPA) sites at Cobden, Lake Cobrico and Lake Elingamite are returning values well below health trigger levels. The EPA plans to decommission the air monitoring sites in the coming weeks. The monitoring site at Cobden, which monitors a larger area, will remain and continue monitoring until further notice. Data from the monitoring stations is available on EPA's AirWatch website www.epa.vic.gov.au/EPAAirWatch.

If members of the community are in any way concerned with the proposed decommissioning of the air monitoring sites, please call the ICC on (03) 5559 2345 from tomorrow (Friday 27th April 2018).

With the cessation of the fire danger period approaching, please consider delaying your burn off to reduce the incidence of smoke drift.

This is the final newsletter to be issued from the ICC – your local councils will be providing this service and all information is freely available from their websites.



Assessing cultural value of the root ball of fallen trees