

Monitoring air quality in fire affected areas

June 26, 2009

Why carry out air monitoring for asbestos?

We are responding to community concerns about air quality, particularly asbestos, in areas affected by the 7 February 2009 bushfires.

Who is doing the work?

The EPA and the Department of Human Services are working together to monitor air quality in the affected areas.

What areas are being monitored?

General community areas such as town halls, schools and the 'main street' in bushfire affected areas are being monitored.

Not all locations can be monitored. The aim is to monitor areas with the most bushfire affected properties.

Results

Location	Sampling period	Number of samples	Results
Buxton (CFA)	7 Mar to 19 June 2009	28	Less than 0.01 fibre/ml
Callignee (cnr of Neaves and Pumps rd)	8 Mar to 9 Apr 2009	32	Less than 0.01 fibre/ml
Chum Creek (cnr of Ainsworth and Chum rd)	17 to 29 March 2009	12	Less than 0.01 fibre/ml
Dixons Creek Primary School	25 Mar to 6 Apr 2009	5	Less than 0.01 fibre/ml
Flowerdale (CFA)	7 Mar to 11 June 2009	41	Less than 0.01 fibre/ml
Kinglake (Recovery Centre)	7 Mar to 26 June 2009	63	Less than 0.01 fibre/ml
Kinglake (Animal Relief Centre)	17 Mar to 19 Mar 2009	2	Less than 0.01 fibre/ml
Kinglake Middle Primary School	31 Mar to 2 Apr 2009	2	Less than 0.01 fibre/ml
Kinglake West (Uniting Church)	7 Mar to 24 June 2009	32	Less than 0.01 fibre/ml
Marysville (CFA)	19 Mar to 26 June 2009	50	Less than 0.01 fibre/ml
Narbethong (Camping store)	8 Mar to 26 June 2009	38	Less than 0.01 fibre/ml
Steels Creek (Community Centre)	17 Mar to 9 Apr 2009	12	Less than 0.01 fibre/ml
Strathewen (Recovery Centre)	25 Mar to 9 Apr 2009	8	Less than 0.01 fibre/ml
Yarra Glen (cnr of Skyline and Wise rd)	17 Mar to 3 Apr 2009	9	Less than 0.01 fibre/ml

Test method is in accordance with the 2005 NOHSC Guidance Note on the membrane filter method for estimating airborne asbestos fibres 2nd edition. Laboratory analysis has been carried out by a NATA accredited laboratory.

Authorised by Victorian Government, 50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.
June 2009

Department of Human Services

What about air monitoring during clean up operations?

The air monitoring does not provide information about specific properties or in the immediate vicinity of clean up activities.

Licensed contractors engaged in clean up activities are subject to a compliance code for removing asbestos, which includes strict measures to control dusts that may contain asbestos.

What about when I return to inspect my property?

When inspecting fire-damaged properties you should take precautions to minimise the risk from any disturbance of the dust and ashes:

- Do not stir up dust or ashes
- Wear a personal protection kit, available from community hubs, relief and recovery centres
- Do NOT undertake property clean-up
- Do NOT take children to damaged or destroyed properties.

What do the results mean?

The monitoring can detect fibres down to levels of 0.01 fibres/ml.

Results greater than this level do not imply an immediate health threat.

Asbestos exposure becomes a health concern when high concentrations of asbestos fibres are inhaled over a long period. Illness is very unlikely to result from a single exposure or from a short period of exposure to lower levels.

At what level will action be taken?

The monitoring method used counts all fibres in air. If we find results above the level of 0.01 fibres we carry out further analysis to confirm the presence of asbestos.

If the results exceed 0.03 fibres/ml then action (such as increasing dust suppression measures) will be taken to reduce the exposure of the community.

The 24 hour airborne asbestos sampling results are listed in the following Table.

Where can I get further information?

If you have any further questions please contact DHS Environmental Health Unit on **1300 761 874** or EPA Victoria on **9695 2722**.

