



Hazelwood Health Study Fact Sheet 1

Smoke exposure during the Hazelwood mine fire was associated with increased ambulance call out for respiratory and cardiac events

The Hazelwood Health Study researchers have completed some preliminary data analysis which suggests an association between Hazelwood mine fire smoke exposure and an increase in ambulance attendance for cardiac and respiratory conditions in the Latrobe Valley.

This research uses smoke exposure levels estimated by the CSIRO along with Ambulance Victoria attendance data for medical conditions which were assessed, by the paramedics, as being cardiac or respiratory-related.

The findings show that ambulance call outs for cough, asthma, heart attack and heart failure, during February and March 2014, were elevated in the areas of the Latrobe Valley with higher levels of smoke exposure.

The researchers took in to consideration ambulance attendance data from January 2011 to December 2014 to ensure that seasonal and temperature changes were not an alternative explanation for the increase in ambulance attendance during the mine fire period. Because of heightened health sensitivities during the period of the fire, the researchers concede that some people may have been more likely to call an ambulance when they might not have otherwise; however this is unlikely to explain all of the increase in ambulance attendance.

The findings, which are considered preliminary while the researchers further refine the smoke exposure models, will be presented as a poster at the International Society for Environmental Epidemiology conference in Rome, Italy on 3 September 2016. The purpose of the presentation to international experts is to facilitate early discussion and feedback about the analytical approaches employed by the researchers. Meanwhile the Study will continue to collect health information from the community.