

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO.2 – HEALTH

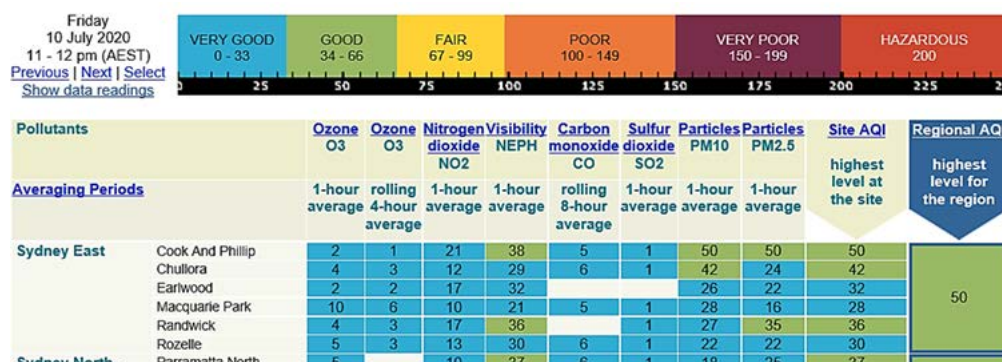
HEALTH IMPACTS OF EXPOSURE TO POOR LEVELS OF AIR QUALITY RESULTING FROM BUSHFIRES AND DROUGHT

Councillor Miller's response to Question on Notice from virtual hearing via videoconference, Friday 12 June 2020:

What did the City of Sydney do in terms of WHS to protect our outdoor workers during the days of poor air quality during the summer bushfire season?

1. Air Quality Index

The City established a link to the Air Quality Index on the City's Safety Management System (SMS) home page to enable staff to remain up to date on an hourly basis with the air quality in the City and the state. The link (below) was promoted to all staff.



2. Work Environment Procedure

The City revised its Work Environment Operational Procedure to include guidance for Managers and staff around air quality and workplace measures to be undertaken on days of compromised air quality.

3. Business Unit Risk Assessments & Work Instructions

Business Units undertook a review of risk assessments and work instructions to incorporate controls to mitigate risks associated with reduced air quality.

4. Consultation

The City undertook extensive consultation around air quality and involved staff in the identification and implementation of risk controls via staff meetings, toolbox talks and Health and Safety Committee meetings. The City also consulted SafeWork NSW who also endorsed the approach that the City was taking.

5. Staff Bulletins and Safety Management System Updates

Numerous staff bulleting and updates were provided to staff to keep them informed (sample below):

Dear all

With poor air quality expected to be an ongoing issue through the summer months please review and/or implement appropriate control measures for your Business Unit for this identified hazard.

What to do

- Where air quality has been deemed "hazardous" avoid all **non-essential** outdoor work.
- Monitor the welfare of those workers who have identified as having respiratory or heart conditions.
- Air quality is transient and should be re-assessed regularly throughout the shift once identified as a hazard.
- Purchase **P2 masks** for use on occasions where air quality has been deemed hazardous and workers are required to be outside for 'essential' work. These can be purchased through Winc or other reputable stationary or safety equipment suppliers.
- Provide alternative work for outdoor workers on "hazardous" air quality days (such as review of WHS and other work procedures, time for training)

Where identified by Management as an essential service, the following should be adopted during performance of outdoor work activities:

- Those with known respiratory conditions should assess whether they are fit for work. Report to Manager / Supervisor if considered unfit to perform work duties.
- Use P2 Masks when outdoors (ensure proper training in maintenance and use including proper fit).
- All workers are to modify outdoor work activities where practical (eg: taking regular breaks).
- Report to Manager / Supervisor if any changes in environment conditions result in further concerns about the local area air quality.

More information on Air Quality Guidelines

The air quality index (AQI) is an index for reporting daily and hourly air quality. It is an indication of how clean or polluted the air is in areas across NSW.

The AQI is a quick and easy tool to inform you about:

- Air pollution levels at your nearest monitoring site or region
- Specific information for people more at risk from exposure to short-term air pollution
- Simple steps to take to protect yourself

The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) is responsible for air quality monitoring in NSW and issues the AQI. Their website lists the current AQI in a defined region and is updated on an hourly basis ([using 24hour average readings](#)).

The AQI in NSW is obtained from the Office of Environment and Heritage at www.environment.nsw.gov.au/AQMS/aqi.htm - Click on **NSW index values** - The City of Sydney will use measurements taken at the **Cook And Phillip** monitoring station

What the air quality index means

When you look at the AQI at your nearest monitoring site or in you region, you will see the display of a colour depending on the air quality measured, as per the table below. The AQI will help you understand the current level of air quality and provide information on how to reduce your risk of exposure to air pollution if necessary.

AQI	What action should people take?
Very Good 0-33	Enjoy activities
Good 34-66	Enjoy activities
Fair 67-99	People unusually sensitive to air pollution: Plan strenuous outdoor activities when air quality is better
Poor 100-149	AIR POLLUTION HEALTH ALERT Sensitive Groups: Cut back or reschedule strenuous outdoor activity
Very Poor 150-200	AIR POLLUTION HEALTH ALERT Sensitive groups: Avoid strenuous outdoor activities Everyone: Cut back or reschedule strenuous outdoor activities
Hazardous 200+	AIR POLLUTION HEALTH ALERT Sensitive groups: Avoid all outdoor physical activities Everyone: Significantly cut back on outdoor physical activities

Further Resources

Please refer to the following NSW Health Fact Sheets for more information on what you can do to avoid or reduce the impact of bushfire smoke on your health:

[NSW Health Bushfire Smoke Fact Sheet](#)

[NSW Health Air Quality Fact Sheet](#)

[NSW Health Particulate Matter Fact Sheet](#)

[How to Fit and Remove a P2 Respirator](#)