

How EPA monitors Victoria's air



Environment
Protection
Authority Victoria

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Fact sheet

Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) monitors air quality at a number of locations around the state. The data collected by air monitors provides EPA and the Victorian community with important information about air quality.

Types of air monitoring stations

EPA uses different types of air monitors for different purposes:

- **General conditions monitors** provide EPA with information on general air quality and pollution happening over a large area.
- **Local conditions monitors** tell us about local air quality and pollution issues.
- **Incident air monitors** are set up to respond to major pollution events.

Monitoring Victoria's ambient air quality

EPA's ambient air quality network is made up of **general conditions monitors**. General conditions monitors are strategically placed around the state and form the foundation of EPA's monitoring network. Some monitors are fixed and some are mobile. EPA has been monitoring ambient air quality at some locations, such as Alphington, Footscray and Traralgon, for more than 30 years. EPA uses the air quality data collected at these stations to report annually on Victoria's ambient air quality. This is done by assessing the data against the national air quality standards, known as the Ambient [Air Quality National Environment Protection Measure \(NEPM\)](#). These standards are incorporated into the [State Environment Protection Policy \(SEPP – Ambient Air Quality\)](#).

Monitoring local air quality issues

EPA has a limited number of **local conditions monitors** that are placed in communities where there is a specific pollution concern. Currently there is a local conditions monitor in Brooklyn, which is part of EPA's campaign to improve air quality in the Brooklyn Industrial Precinct. EPA operates local conditions monitors for varying periods of time, depending on the specific pollution concern.

Monitoring during major pollution events

EPA can deploy its incident air monitoring equipment when requested by emergency services. The portable equipment allows EPA to provide localised air quality readings to the incident controller.

The data collected by the incident air monitors provides useful information about the impacts of a pollution event and are used to make decisions about what EPA and other agencies do next.

The deployment of incident air monitors complements other predictive tools that emergency services use to provide information and advice to the community on air quality impacts during major pollution events.

Reporting air quality information

EPA is committed to its role of monitoring and reporting of air quality data to the Victorian community.

EPA does this in several ways:

- a daily forecasting service posted on its [website](#)



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- its Twitter account: **@EPA_Victoria** where all forecasts have the hash tag: **#airqualityforecast**
- through its website [EPA AirWatch](#) that is updated hourly and shows data collected from its monitoring stations.
- reports annually on Victoria's ambient air quality as part of its obligation under the NEPM ([Ambient Air Quality](#)) and SEPP ([Ambient Air Quality](#)).

People unable to access EPA's website can call EPA's call centre **24/7** on **1300 372 842 (1300 EPA VIC)** to obtain the latest air quality data.

EPA's role in planned burns

Planned burning involves lighting fires under carefully managed conditions to reduce the risk of bushfire. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and Parks Victoria undertake planned burning across Victoria, particularly on public land such as forests.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) usually monitors smoke impacts during planned burns and can request that EPA deploy its incident air monitoring equipment.

EPA can also provide information on air quality forecasting when requested.

What does EPA do when an air monitor shows a high reading for airborne particles?

If a monitor shows a high reading, EPA will investigate to understand what could be causing the reading. It will investigate by doing some or all of the following things:

- comparing the data from the monitors with data from other air monitors in the area
- mobilising EPA staff to observe air quality in the area or examine the air monitors
- consulting with other government agencies, such as the Country Fire Authority (CFA) or Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) that may have additional information.

If there's an issue with poor air quality, EPA will:

- inform the community and relevant government agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services; update the information on EPA's website; send email and SMS notifications to subscribers; and inform media outlets
- investigate, if necessary, the extent and cause of the air quality issue, and determine whether it's happened before and whether communities will be impacted
- do more monitoring to complement the air monitor if required.

If there's a problem with the air monitor, EPA will put up a notice on its website explaining the situation, and temporarily remove the affected data from the website.

Read more about EPA's role in monitoring Victoria's air:

The types of air monitors used in EPA's air monitoring network:

<http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/our-work/monitoring-the-environment/monitoring-victorias-air/epa-air-monitoring-network>

Access up-to-date air quality information at EPA AirWatch: <http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/AirWatch>

[Watch the video](#) to learn what happens inside one of EPA's air monitoring stations:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mp3kztZy7ow>