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Dear [REDACTED]

Following a report in the Herald Sun on Tuesday December 6 2001 which alleged that CFA personnel and their families had been exposed to carcinogenic chemicals while living and working at the CFA Fiskville Training Ground, I was asked to assess the current status with regard to health and safety issues relating to these chemicals.

After reviewing several reports provided by CFA, and meeting with CFA personnel and Worksafe Victoria representatives at Fiskville on Tuesday December 6, I make the following comments:

Training Activities

Since approximately 1995, the only materials burned for training purposes at CFA Fiskville are:

- LPG on Gas PAD and Flammable Liquids PAD
- Unleaded Petrol and Diesel on the Flammable Liquids PAD
- Wood and small quantities of Diesel/Petrol in Fire Buildings

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS's) are on site for all of these products and risk control measures and PAD Standard Operating Procedures ensure that the exposure of CFA trainees and instructors to vapours, liquids and combustion products is minimised. Risk control measures include respiratory protection where appropriate, and protective clothing such as overalls, boots, gloves and safety goggles.

LPG, Unleaded Petrol and Diesel are supplied directly to appropriately marked storage tanks on site. These fuels are then piped directly to props on the Training PAD.

The Training PAD area is fenced off and restricted to CFA personnel by swipe card access.

It should also be noted that risk assessments have been carried out, and risk control measures implemented, for the use of firefighting foams used at the training ground. Regular water quality testing is also carried out on water drawn from Dams used for firefighting training.

Drum Burial Sites

The past and current locations of drum burial sites is still unclear and past and present CFA personnel are being contacted, and reports being sourced to establish these locations and whether or not drums and/or contamination is still present.

The report by CRA ATD of November 1996 "Fiskville Training College Review of Site Assessments and Remediation Options" states that:

- 3 drum burial pits are located south of the western end of the airstrip near the hangar
- 3 bores (bores 9, 10 & 11) were drilled to a depth of 1.0 metres at these pits
- No drums were encountered during sampling
- Test results summarised in this report but taken from the Diomides and Associate report of June 1996 "Environmental Site Assessment, CFA Training College Fiskville" showed low level contamination (EPA category C) for Total Petroleum Hydrocarbons (TPH), and BTEX (Benzene, Toluene, Ethylbenzene and Xylene). It should be noted that the BTEX contamination was at a depth of 1.0 metre and that the concentrations near the surface (0.1 metre) were within the limits required for classification as "Clean Fill" by EPA Victoria
- The report recommended that these pits be excavated and backfilled with clean soil.
- No groundwater was located in this area and there is limited potential for contaminant migration

No activities are carried out in this area even though contamination levels at surface level are low.

Conclusions

It is considered that personnel carrying out training and other activities at CFA Fiskville should not suffer any adverse health effects from chemical exposure from either the burning of LPG, Petrol and Diesel in the Training PAD area, or from the drum burial pits located south of the western end of the airstrip near the hangar.

Recommendations

Confirmation should be sought on:

- The past and current locations of any other drum burial pits
- The status of these pits with regard to contamination levels

Please contact me if you have any queries

Yours sincerely

