

# Fiskville Training College

## Community update



### CFA Fiskville

CFA's Fiskville Training College, located at 4549 Geelong-Ballan Road, plays a vital role in training Victoria's firefighters and emergency service workers, including CFA's 59,000 volunteers, career firefighters, and staff. This campus has been CFA's principal training ground since 1973 and provides the facilities and expertise that deliver a comprehensive range of hot fire training, including petrochemical fires, tanker fires, house and structure fires, vehicle and aviation fires.

Fiskville is one of Australia's largest fire and emergency management training colleges which employs residents from the local Fiskville and Ballan community.

### Fiskville Investigation and Assessments

In 2011 concerns were raised regarding the historic use of chemicals in hot fire training, including firefighting foams, and the potential risk of chemical residues affecting both human health and the local environment.

Acting on these serious claims, CFA commissioned Professor Robert Joy to conduct an independent investigation into the past use of chemicals in hot fire training at Fiskville.

The Report of Professor Rob Joy *Understanding the Past to Inform the Future, June 2012* made recommendations to undertake

extensive environmental and human health risk assessments of CFA's Fiskville Training College and the downstream environment. In July 2012, CFA engaged environmental engineering firm Cardno Lane Piper (Cardno) and an eminent Australian toxicologist to undertake these assessments and prepare formal reports.

Cardno and the toxicologist prepared 12 Fiskville assessment reports regarding the nature and extent of contamination at the site and downstream.

The outcomes of these assessments are positive and conclude there are no major risks to CFA personnel, site visitors, the local/downstream community, or the ecology.

### EPA Oversight of Fiskville

In response to the issues identified in Professor Joy's Report, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) issued two 'Clean-Up Notices' for Fiskville in January 2013. The EPA issues these notices to prevent or remedy potential non-compliances with the Environmental Protection Act.

In accordance with the terms of these notices, an EPA-appointed Environmental Auditor recently completed an independent audit of Fiskville and its environs to identify any risk of harm due to live fire training activities at the site, including the storage and use of chemicals.

As part of his audit, the Environmental Auditor reviewed all previous reports and tests conducted into possible contamination of water and soil at Fiskville, including Cardno's recent reports.

In his audit report, the Environmental Auditor concluded:

- Human health risks from potential exposures – both on-site at Fiskville and off-site – to residues from historical hot fire training activities are low and acceptable; and
- Environmental works already underway at Fiskville will reduce the potential for risks to the ecology on-site at Fiskville. The potential risks include possible impacts on higher order predators, such as birds of prey, which might eat fish from Lake Fiskville or rabbits and other small species on the Fiskville site.

The EPA has reviewed the assessments and recommendations made by the Environmental Auditor which notes that residues from the historical use of firefighting foams present in and around CFA's Fiskville Training College pose a low and acceptable risk to workers, trainees, visitors and residents downstream of Lake Fiskville.

The EPA-appointed Environmental Auditor's report and all of Cardno's reports are posted on EPA's website [epa.vic.gov.au](http://epa.vic.gov.au)

## **Beremboke and Eclipse Creeks – Water Quality**

Barwon Water has confirmed there is no public drinking water taken directly from the Beremboke or Eclipse Creeks downstream of Lake Fiskville. In addition, Cardno scientists and the Environmental Auditor note that it is unlikely that people are taking their own drinking water from these creeks.

The Beremboke and Eclipse Creeks are seasonal and often dry up. Like any creek or farm dam, they contain contaminants such as agricultural chemicals and fertilisers, animal waste and bacteria. Environmental assessments conducted by Cardno have confirmed the presence of contaminants in surface water in the Beremboke and Eclipse Creeks downstream of Fiskville.

In relation to these assessments the EPA-appointed Environmental Auditor concludes:

### **Key points**

- As a precautionary measure, water taken directly out of the Beremboke and Eclipse Creeks should not be used for human consumption (i.e. drinking water).
- The Beremboke and Eclipse Creeks are safe for livestock watering and irrigation.
- Produce and meat from livestock which has been watered from the Beremboke and Eclipse Creeks is safe for human consumption.

CFA has previously notified a range of regulatory authorities about these assessments including the Department of Health, the Department of Environment and Primary Industries, PrimeSafe, WorkSafe, EPA, Moorabool Shire Council, local water authorities and several other key stakeholders. The Department of Health advises Victorians not to drink river water, even when the water is treated by household treatment systems, as these systems have their limitations and may not remove all harmful microorganisms and chemicals. Refer to attached information sheet issued by the Department of Health. For more information, go to [health.vic.gov.au](http://health.vic.gov.au) and search 'unsafe water'.

## Fiskville Environmental Works

CFA recently completed engineering works at Fiskville to prevent the discharge of residues from CFA's hot fire training operations into nearby creeks.

These works include the diversion of the Beremboke Creek around Lake Fiskville and the creation of a new wetland to filter stormwater before it enters the Beremboke creek. The wetlands will improve the ecology of Fiskville and create a habitat for local birds, frogs and other aquatic species.

Tree planting at the new wetlands

## Next Phase of Works

CFA will soon begin a second stage of works to remediate the surface water and sediments in Lake Fiskville and four other dams on the training site. This will involve the drainage of water from these catchments and the removal and treatment of soils. CFA plans to call for Expressions of Interest from qualified environmental engineering companies to undertake this work. These remediation works are expected to be completed by 2017.



## Questions?

Please email: [fiskville-enquiries@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:fiskville-enquiries@cfa.vic.gov.au) or contact CFA on (03) 9262-8216.

Other relevant agencies:

- Moorabool Shire Council (03 5366 7100)
- Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (03 5232 9100)
- Southern Rural Water (0419 509 087)
- Barwon Water (1300 656 007)
- Environment Protection Authority Victoria (1300 372 842)
- Department of Health (1300 761 874)

**You can also find more information online:**

[cfa.vic.gov.au/about/fiskville-investigation](http://cfa.vic.gov.au/about/fiskville-investigation)

# Are you using unsafe river water in your home?

health

This information sheet is designed to inform people living in or visiting rural communities about the health risks associated with taking water from rivers and streams for domestic use.

## Is it safe to use untreated water from a river or stream?

Water from rivers and streams may contain harmful microorganisms and chemicals that can make people sick. Even in remote areas away from human habitation, harmful microorganisms from native animals are still a potential source of illness and, as waterways get closer to farming activities and country communities, the risk increases due to runoff from farms, houses and commercial activities.

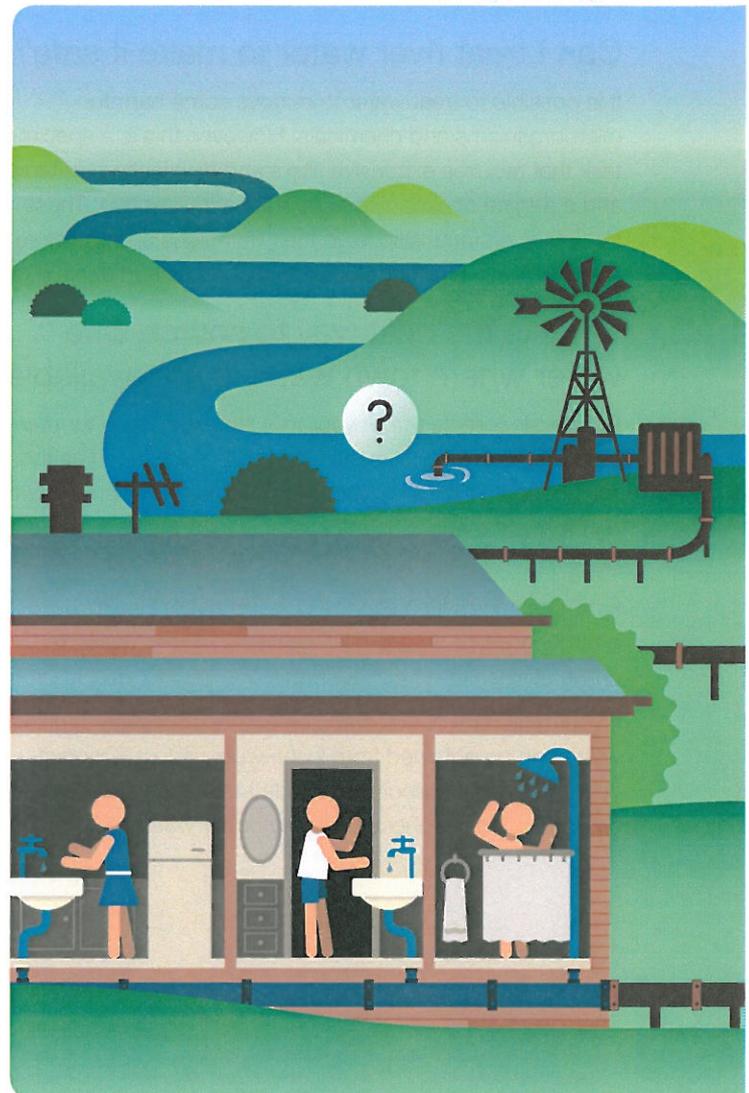
It is important to note that:

- Consuming untreated river or stream water may lead to severe illness (for example, gastroenteritis). Children, the elderly, pregnant women and people with suppressed immunity are the most vulnerable.
- Guests or visitors may also become ill if they consume untreated river or stream water.

The risk of contamination increases when it rains, and during floods, as stormwater washes materials from tracks and roads into rivers and streams. Additionally, flooded properties often result in farm chemicals and sewage from septic tanks being washed into waterways.

Another possible risk is from blue-green algae, which can be toxic to humans, domestic pets and stock. These can grow in dams, streams and even in unroofed water tanks under the right conditions.

For these reasons, untreated raw water should not be directly piped into homes or taken from rivers and streams for drinking, or used in the kitchen or bathroom.



## Will boiling river water make it safe?

Boiling river water only kills harmful microorganisms. As water from rivers and streams in rural areas may also contain chemicals from activities such as farming, boiling the water will not effectively remove the chemical hazard (algal toxins could also be released to the water if blue-green algae are present).

## Can I treat river water to make it safe?

It is possible to treat water to remove some harmful microorganisms and chemicals. However, this is a specialist task that requires expensive filters and disinfection systems, and a degree of expertise to operate and maintain. These treatment systems also have their limitations and therefore may not remove all harmful microorganisms and chemicals.

## What is the best way to source safe water where town water is not available?

Rainwater collected from your roof has been used for many generations in rural communities and is recognised as the most reliable and safest way to source water where a town drinking water supply is not available. Groundwater can also be of high quality if bores are well maintained and protected.

For more information see the Department of Health publication *Your private drinking water supply*, available online at <[health.vic.gov.au/water](http://health.vic.gov.au/water)>.

If your tank runs out of water, emergency supplies of drinking water can be obtained from local water carters. Contact your local water corporation for details of local water carters, or look up the telephone directory under water carters.

## Where can I find more information about drinking water safety?

### Department of Health

- [www.health.vic.gov.au/water](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/water)
- Water Program on 1300 761 874

### Your council Environmental Health Officer

For your local council contact details refer to your local telephone directory or refer to the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) website at <[www.dpcd.vic.gov.au](http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au)>.

To receive this document in an accessible format phone 1300 761 874 using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required.

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