

Monitoring of grass fire smoke

I'm sure that you'd agree that over the past week the smoke from grass fires has been bad. I've found that

INDUSTRY UPDATE

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where I live in Tannum Sands that it's much worse at night and in the early morning.

As shown by continuous air quality monitoring done by the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM), this is the same across Gladstone and in other towns such as Brisbane, Mackay and Townsville where DERM also monitors air quality.

This monitoring shows that the readings for Particulate Matter are very high. Particulate Matter, commonly referred to as dust, is made up of solid particles suspended in the air which vary in shape and size.

DERM monitors two sizes of Particulate Matter (PM), PM 2.5 and PM 10. PM 10 is about 1/6th the diameter of a human hair or about the size of a pollen particle. PM 2.5 is about the size of small bacteria or large viruses. These particles are monitored because they can penetrate into the lower airways of our lungs.

As we've seen, PM 2.5 and 10 particles can also remain in the air for several days or longer and can be spread by winds long distances from the fires.

Air quality standards are used to assess the severity of DERM's readings. These standards are based on the standards recommended by the World Health Organisation.

To make these standards easier to understand, DERM uses a grading system based on the percentage a reading is of its air quality standard. If a reading is between 0 to 33% of its standard, it is said to be Very Good and if it is between 34 and 66% of its standard the reading's grading is Good.

Should the reading be between 67 and 99% of its standard it is assessed as Fair and it is Poor if it is from 100 to 150% of its standard. If it is worse than that, the grading is Very Poor.

Over much of the past week PM 2.5 and PM 10 levels have been Poor or Very Poor.

Each day page 2 of The Observer has a summary of the air quality results for the previous 24 hours up until 3 PM the previous day. This summary takes the worst hourly DERM reading for the worst contaminant and publishes this grading as the daily air quality index for each monitoring location.

If you want to see the latest air quality results, the GILG front page www.gilg.com.au has a link to DERM's monitoring data where you'll also find a more detailed explanation of DERM's air monitoring processes.

If you want to find out how to avoid the grass fire smoke, the GILG online forum article has some useful links.

*Cheers,
Kurt.*



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