

# *Coal Mine Fire in Australia Could Burn for Months*

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Sydney, February 28 (RHC)-- Authorities in Australia say a massive fire at an open-pit coal mine could continue to burn for months. The fire has already burned for two weeks, enveloping the town of Morwell in the state of Victoria with thick, toxic smoke.

Victoria's chief health officer, Rosemary Lester, said that the priority at the moment is "to concentrate on the short term health effects that the smoke can cause." She said that fine particles in the smoke can get down into the lungs and can cause short term health effects like exacerbation of asthma and the worsening of heart or other lung conditions." and we know that the people who are most vulnerable to these effects are people with pre-existing heart and lung conditions, children, the elderly, smokers and pregnant women."

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