

Subject: EPA Tasmania - News Article
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A new network of air quality monitoring stations in Tasmania will start operating later this month.

Director EPA Warren Jones says the first of the air quality monitoring equipment has arrived in the State and is currently being assembled for installation.

"The new monitoring system being implemented by the EPA is called BLANKET (the Base-Line Air Network of EPA Tasmania)," Mr Jones said. "BLANKET will cover a wide area from Burnie to Geeveston and will include up to 15 fixed stations reporting real time indicative particle levels every 10 to 15 minutes." "Once the network is up and running, the data will be published almost immediately on a publicly accessible web page.

The provision of real-time air quality will assist with the management of smoke from planned burns, as well as being a valuable public information tool." Mr Jones said the stations will operate year round - providing data on smoke from planned burns, winter-time smoke concentrations from domestic heating as well as summer bushfire smoke.

"Most stations in the pilot study will be located in the north east and south, in areas historically affected by smoke from planned burn operations," Mr Jones said.

"The monitoring will provide an objective measure of air pollution against the standards and will provide feedback to help refine the management system." The monitoring is in conjunction with a new Coordinated Smoke Management Strategy which has been developed by the Forest Practices Authority (FPA) and is being trialled this year.

The FPA and the EPA are working with representatives of various land management agencies to reduce the risk of smoke pollution within populated areas through improvements to the planning and conduct of planned burns.

"The Strategy provides for the better prediction and co-ordination of burns - including placing restrictions to ban or limit the number of burns on days when weather forecasts predict poor smoke dispersal. It also provides for better training and for more smoke monitoring stations in Tasmania," Mr Jones said.

The EPA in Tasmania currently monitors PM10 and PM2.5 air quality levels at Launceston, Hobart, Rowella and George Town. Monitoring will commence at Devonport this year.

Unvalidated air quality readings for the previous day in Hobart, Launceston and Rowella are available online

<http://www.environment.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=3D2809>

Background information about particulate material including PM2.5 and PM10 can be found.

Environment Protection Authority

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