Victorian bushfires toll climbs to 76 - posted by CJaKfOrEsT (), on: 2009/2/8 4:39

The death toll from Victoria's bushfires has risen to 76, police say.

The state's toll from the latest bushfire disaster has thus exceeded the number of Victorians killed in the Ash Wednesday fires in February 1983, when 47 died.

Deaths have now been reported in Marysville and Whittlesea and Yea.

Six more people were confirmed dead in St Andrews, taking the town's bushfire fatalities to 11, while four more deaths were recorded in Kinglake West, sending the count to 10.

The death toll in Humevale rose to five, with two more fatalities confirmed.

One person is now confirmed dead at Marysville and three at Whittlesea.

Police continue to advise people to avoid fire-affected areas.

They say it is still too dangerous for many residents to return home.

Police also say some people may be unable to return home while disaster victims are being identified.

Ten people remain in a critical condition in hospital after being burnt in the Victorian bushfires.

A spokesman from Melbourne's The Alfred hospital said 10 patients were in a critical condition in the hospital's Intensive Care Unit.

A further 10 were in a stable condition.

The spokesman said the hospital had received two new patients from the Austin Hospital on Sunday.

He said no one at The Alfred had died from the fire.

Touring the firegrounds with Premier John Brumby and Victoria's police chief commissioner Christine Nixon, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced a joint federal-state $10 million emergency relief fund for the victims.

He said emergency Centrelink payments are available to those needing immediate financial assistance.

"Hell and all its fury has visited the good people of Victoria in the last 24 hours," Mr Rudd said.

"Many good people now lie dead. Many others lie injured.

"This is an appalling tragedy for Victoria but, because of that, it's an appalling tragedy for the nation."

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) said there had been "significant structure losses" in the town, but everyone had been safely evacuated to the local sports ground, Gallipoli Park.

Emergency response crews were having difficulty accessing the town due to fallen trees blocking roads, but ABC Radio is reporting that people have now been evacuated in a convoy from Gallipoli Park to staging areas.

Mr Brumby said volunteer firefighters and aircraft were coming in from NSW and South Australia, while the Australian army will also be brought in to help.

Mr Rudd said the nation's prayers are with those affected by the fires.
"Our first response as human beings is one of the deepest empathy for people whose lives have now been devastated," Mr Rudd said.

"This loss of life, the numbers of injured, the horrific injuries, our thoughts and our prayers go out to each and every one of them as they now try and deal with this tragedy and recover from the damage which has occurred."


Re: Victorian bushfires toll climbs to 76 - posted by CJaKfOrEsT (), on: 2009/2/8 5:09
Please keep this in your prayers. The most devastated area is within a one hour drive from where I live. On top of the loss of life, it is estimated that over 300 houses have been destroyed. Presently in Victoria there is a rental crisis, meaning that it is hard to find a place to live, even apart from a tragedy like this occurring.

I have also heard that (http://www.mmm.org.au) MMM, who are a missionary organisation that assist Christian ministries with their building and maintenance needs, so that they are able to focus on their work of reaching out, have had their headquarters destroyed. The devastation is beyond belief, and hard to grasp, especially considering the fact that few of us are unconnected to someone who is affected by it all.

Re: - posted by wildhorse86, on: 2009/2/8 9:38
Guys,
Pray for us here please. The devastation is beyond anything I have seen, ever!

You look at the TV and you want to cry... The state is essentially on fire and the area is so dry.

I live in a place called Mentone which is pretty safe but my church and many loved ones and friends are up in the bush where there is just fear that at any time the Dandenong Ranges could go up.

Many have lost life and how many aren't Christians?

I am a computer tech for 3 nursing agencies and nurses are in heavy demand. They will also no doubt suffer Trauma themselves. Some of our emergency nurses we can't contact and we nearly lost a staff member yesterday as she was trapped by all sides and praise God that the wind changed.

May God bring relief in this turmoil.

Michael

Re: - posted by HeartSong, on: 2009/2/8 12:43

Quote:
-----------------------------Some of our emergency nurses we can't contact and we nearly lost a staff member yesterday as she was trapped by all sides and praise God that the wind changed.
-----------------------------

I was reading another article that said that more than a few people were burned alive inside of their vehicles as they were trying to flee the fire. It is difficult to imagine such a thing. What a terror it must be to have the fires of hell bearing down upon you as you try to flee. I drove between two fires one time, and the sudden increase of heat inside of my vehicle was excruciating.

I will be keeping you all in prayer.
Re: , on: 2009/2/8 13:44
I heard about the appalling fires on the news last night. I will be praying also.

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2009/2/8 16:52
Aaron, Michael ...
This is just incredible. Have been reading and watching all this from the links ... it is just beyond me.
We get our share of fires out here, huge swaths of land destroyed and the closet I can recall to what is happening there is a situation in the Oakland Hills near here some years back.
But it is nowhere on the scale of ... how this has happened there. I do not understand the terrain or how these fires can seemingly jump into towns like this. It's all really irrelevant though ... the loss of life, the story's of mothers losing their children of fathers ... the word "horrible".
My prayers

Re: - posted by TomfromOZ, on: 2009/2/8 17:21
This morning I've awoken to the news
Victoria
106 confirmed dead
many people missing
fires still burning
Queensland
Floods & flash flooding
5yr old boy taken by crocodile

Lord have mercy

Re: - posted by HeartSong, on: 2009/2/8 20:16
I was just reading Isaiah, and images of this fire kept popping into my head as I read - especially of the car that appears to have been driving down the road as it was overtaken by the fire.

Isaiah 5:11-17
Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands. Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it. And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled: But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall sanctify in righteousness. Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.

Re: - posted by wildhorse86, on: 2009/2/9 4:13
Guys,
We are looking at 130 dead.
How does it happen? We are in a drought, and then to make things worse we have had a streak of 40-45c days, we may also have more next week.
The embers are just flying and the area of Marysville, we have memories of family holidays... It is all gone now...
It is crazy, people I know have been had friends and families that have been affected.
I have friends and loved ones (and my church) in the hills, that are in an area that is now starting to go on warning.

This state is incredibly dry as well as South Australia.

HeartSong - I am sorry, but I don't understand the link between the thread and the verses?

PRAY PEOPLE PRAY!

Michael

Re: Vic bushfires death toll 'could top 200' - posted by CJaKfOrEsT (), on: 2009/2/9 4:38

Towns have been declared crime scenes and the death toll in Victoria's bushfires could top 200 as the grisly search for bodies continues in communities which have been completely wiped out.

By 6pm on Monday, the toll had reached 131 but that figure was certain to climb as identification experts were called in to take over from volunteer firefighters with the grim task of recovering bodies.

Senior fire and parks officials have told staff they fear the toll will double.

More than 700 homes have been destroyed, 330,000 hectares have been burnt out and more than 52 fires were listed as still burning throughout the state on Monday.

It was impossible to tell how many people were missing, authorities said, while one insurance company said the fires could cost half a billion dollars.

The Kinglake area remains the worst-hit by a fierce 220,000 hectare firestorm which ripped through the region on Saturday, killing 103 people so far and destroying over 550 homes.

At least 33 residents from the township of Kinglake alone have been killed, and a further nine from Kinglake West, with more expected.

The once idyllic communities of Kinglake, Strathewen and Marysville are little more than collections of ash and charcoal, with a few burnt-out house frames standing limply amid charred corrugated iron.

The toll reached seven in tiny Strathewen where only three of the mountain hamlet's 40 houses were still standing.

Nearby Marysville was annihilated and is one town to be declared a crime scene as police Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon confirmed some fires were deliberately lit.

Ms Nixon said a taskforce would be set up on Tuesday to investigate arson.

An emotional Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said the firebugs responsible were nothing short of mass murderers.

"What do you say about anyone like that? There are no words to describe it other than mass murder," Mr Rudd said.

"This is of a level of horror that few of us anticipated."

The Churchill fire in Gippsland, which police confirm was deliberately lit, had killed at least 19 people by 6pm on Monday, including nine in Calligene.

The 35,000 hectare blaze broke through containment lines earlier in the day and hit the town of Churchill, which is also a crime scene, and was threatening nearby Yarram.

In the north of the state, fire around Dederang escalated significantly late on Monday afternoon, also threatening the towns of Beechworth and Yackandandah.

The fire was spotting ahead of the main fire and ash and embers were threatening communities in Gundowring, Gundow
ring Upper, Glen Creek, Kergunyah South, Mudgeegong and Running Creek.

Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers have been traumatised by many of their gruesome discoveries and the job of searching for bodies has been taken over by specialised police Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) teams.

Burnt-out cars which became tombs lined bush roads in the central highlands and volunteers were recovering the charred remains of friends and colleagues.

As more horrifying stories unfolded on Monday, three sisters were waiting near a roadblock outside Healesville when they were told their parents and disabled brother were killed.

Two of the sisters' husbands had gone through the roadblock in a desperate search for Faye and Bill Walker and their wheelchair-bound son, Geoffrey, 53, at their home in the nearby village of Narbethong.

The husbands found their bodies inside the house, with their car parked outside, packed and ready to go with the key in its ignition and family dog in the back.

The three daughters, Marilyn, Julie and Vivian, were inconsolable as they cried and hugged each other at the roadblock when their partners returned with the news.

Twenty serious burns patients have been admitted to The Alfred Hospital in Melbourne in 24 hours, all with burns to more than 30 per cent of their bodies.

The Alfred's Dr De Villiers Smit told reporters the scale of the disaster is worse than the Bali bombings.

"This is by far the worst disaster I've ever been involved with," he said.

Huge emergency relief operations are underway throughout the state, with a massive exercise at Whittlesea which is serving survivors from Kinglake and its environs.

As refugees flooded down the mountain from Kinglake and surrounding townships into Whittlesea, emergency relief workers headed the other way, taking desperately needed food, water and fuel supplies to those who have remained behind.

"That's the second phase of the operation. First it's been making the area safe for firefighters to work in but also getting supplies and resources to people on the mountain who decided to stay and protect their properties," CFA spokesman Dave Wolf told AAP.

Tent cities have been set up in areas such as nearby Yea, while caravans, community halls and strangers' houses have become homes to thousands of newly homeless Victorians.

The Queen expressed her shock at the devastating bushfires in a message to Australia.

"I was shocked and saddened to learn of the terrible toll being exacted by the fires this weekend," the Queen said in a statement.

"I send my heartfelt condolences to the families of all those who have died and my deep sympathy to the many that have lost their homes in this disaster."

Re: - posted by CJaKfOrEsT (), on: 2009/2/9 7:40

Quote:

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crsschk wrote:

I do not understand the terrain or how these fires can seemingly jump into towns like this. It's all really irrelevant though ... the loss of life, the story's of mothers losing their children of fathers ... the word "horrific".

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Without downplaying the loss of life, etc, allow me to help you to see how this has happened. Through my work, at an industrial supply store, I have had contact with some of the fire fighters in my area, which is where I get some of the information, on what has been called the worse natural disaster in Australian history.

Geographically, Australia is a relatively small nation (pop 21mil, compared to 19mil in New York), occupying a massive land mass (7,686,850sq km compared to 141,299sq km in New York).


As can be seen above, Melbourne as a City is tiny, in land mass, but with 3.8mil people, it is the second largest city in Australia (4.3mil in Sydney). The city is built like a "spoke wheel" around its CBD, located at the top of Port Phillip Bay.


My reason for showing this, is because the area outside of the city of Melbourne, consists mostly of forests of gum trees. Even much the outer suburbs, particularly to the north east, have houses and street amongst the trees, as can be seen by the image below.


This is an aerial photo of Greensborough, which is where I grew up. In the middle of the photo, you can see one the largest shopping centres (that's "shopping mall" for our friends in the States;-)) in the northern suburbs. This photo is typical of this town, and there are houses sprawled all through those trees.

Now the areas affected by the fires have houses, on acreage, whether the population is not as dense, and the trees are are plentiful. Below is a map of the areas affected

\[\text{(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:09_Victorian_bushfires_locator_map.png) [Image: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wiki...a/c0/09_Victorian_bushfires_locator_map.png/120px-09_Victorian_bushfires_locator_map.png)}\]

As you can see, the fires aren't coming into the suburban areas of Melbourne, but are affecting the more "rural" areas. It was in these areas that these people have been affected. Although we are talking about some large numbers, percentagewise, these figures are far, far more.

I heard a newsreader speak of how she was warned to stay in her house, when given bush fire training, upon moving into her rural property. Over the years, the tendency was for the bushfires to destroy the trees and surrounding, but many of the buildings have been spared. My uncle was caught in a fire, in New South Wales, where he had a Nectarine orchard. He lost his trees, and his farm equipment, but the fires left over his shed, and house.

These fires have contradicted conventional wisdom, travelling in excess of 150km/h destroying everything in its path. Abandoned cars are being found one the road, with emergency services unable to tell whether they were still occupied when the fires gutted them.
On the first day of the fires, Melbourne was experiencing its hottest on record, at 46.4Â°C (115.5Â°F). Being outside was like standing in front of an oven, because on top on the temperature, were blistering winds. It could be said that the "perfect conditions" for maximum devastation to occur.

Anyway, I hope this sheds some light on what has been going on down here.

*Edit* Thanks to Wikipedia for making these images available. Click on images for author information, etc. *Edit*

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**Re:** - posted by White_Stone (), on: 2009/2/9 10:43

Dear CJakfOrEsT,

Quote:
-------------------This is an aerial photo of Greensborough,
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Clicking on the image brought the terrible problem in complete focus. All those trees, those beautiful trees enable such terrible devastation. Of course, not that the trees are bad to have it is quite simply God's will.

My prayer is for the souls of all those in the path of the fire. If they are not yet saved, I pray God will give them the will to repent.

Thank you for your post.

Kind regards,
white stone

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**Re:** - posted by HeartSong, on: 2009/2/9 11:28

Quote:
-------------------PRAY PEOPLE PRAY!
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I have been praying, and am continuing to pray. You are all on my mind and in my heart.

I was involved with a 520,000 acre fire in the mountains of AZ. After the fire I went and visited the communities that were overtaken. There was complete devastation and the smell was horrible.

By the grace of God, there was no loss of life as we were all evacuated ahead of the fires. But I remember well the radio putting out the warning signal every 15 minutes - three days of trying to decide what to take in my car - finally just letting it all go as I drove away from my house never expecting to see it again.

And then the aftermath of trying to figure out who was to blame. Everybody pointing their finger at the other guy. This being followed by botched relief efforts where somehow those that didn't need assistance received funds, while those that really needed funds went without. And then the coming of the rain and the resulting mudslides inundating homes that had been spared by the fire . . . yes I remember it well.

Both of the fires were started by man. There is a picture that I took of the approaching fire - there is what looks to be an evil presence in the smoke. I titled it "Dancing with the Devil."

EDIT: I forgot to mention that about two weeks after the fire, beautiful green grasses began to emerge from the charred embers of the ravaged landscape. I have a picture of this also, which I titled "Life Emerges."
News and Current Events :: Victorian bushfires toll climbs to 76

Re: - posted by White_Stone (), on: 2009/2/9 12:47
(http://canadafreepress.com/index.php/article/4888) Islam group urges forest fire jihad

Just came upon this, God have mercy.

white stone

Re: - posted by wildhorse86, on: 2009/2/10 7:25
Islam fire jihad... could be propaganda?
First I have even heard of it.

We are now confirmed, 181 dead.

We are also having massive flooding in Queensland.

Michael

Re: - posted by HeartSong, on: 2009/2/11 15:42
Heartbreak at home as Aussies return after fires
By TANALEE SMITH, Associated Press Writer

KINGLAKE, Australia – A cast-iron potbellied stove stood on what used to be the verandah of Peter Denson's home, the only thing left intact after a ferocious wildfire destroyed most of this wooded township.

The uninsured 58-year-old carpenter stepped onto a piece of his wall, which crunched and gave way, and pointed to where his bed had been, where his refrigerator had sat, where his computer once was.

His beloved Harley-Davidson was a burned-out shell under a crumpled shed. He was left with only his car and the clothes on his back.

Faced with the daunting prospect of rebuilding, he asked: "Where do you start? Where do you start?"

Police allowed hundreds of homeowners to return to their towns Wednesday for the first time since weekend wildfires — driven by 60 mph winds and 115-degree temperatures — spread quickly through drought-dry forests and brush in southeastern Australia. The fires killed 181 people — authorities say the death toll will exceed 200 — and destroyed more than 1,000 houses. More than 5,000 are homeless.

Many of Denson's neighbors in Kinglake, 70 miles north of Melbourne, returned to similar scenes of utter devastation and loss. Not a single house remained standing on his street, now a smoky, silent moonscape of blackened tree trunks and charred earth.

A chimney poked out of a pile of rubble where a neighbor's house had stood. Blue-and-white checkered police tape cordoned off an area where bones had been found. A mailbox or two was still upright. A solitary swing set stood idle in a yard.

Denson and his daughter, Amberley, drove slowly up the hill to Kinglake, where he has lived for 30 years and where his daughter grew up. Their progress was slow because emergency workers were restoring power lines and cutting down trees that appeared ready to fall.

"It's eerie. It's like a movie," Amberley said as they drove through the desolate town that still smells of acrid smoke. "It looks completely different up here."

Here and there she pointed out a landmark — "My kindergarten is gone. Oh no, the pizza place!" — or a friend's home. They waved as they passed familiar faces and wondered aloud which neighbors had survived.

At the Kinglake Community Center, the township reunited after days cut off from each other due to road closures. Friend
s embraced, confirmed the safety of those not there, and wept for those killed — at least 39 in the town, by the latest count.

Denson was away from home on Saturday afternoon when he received a phone call about the approaching fire.

"We were looking at the sky on the horizon and thought, 'This looks pretty freaky,'" Denson recalled. "The sun went red — the smoke went in front of the sun — and it was just this red ball."

Denson had driven to the home of his son, Joel, since his own house appeared to be in the path of the flames. Joel's neighborhood was largely cleared of trees, and he was home with his 3-year-old son, Beau.

Denson's other son, Paul, soon arrived with his partner, fleeing a blaze that roared down their wooded street.

Joel's wife, Sonia Dukic, soon came home from working at the nearby grocery store, where a frenzied scene had erupted when residents saw smoke and flames bearing down on the town. Dukic said she drove her way through a traffic jam of nearly 100 cars to get home, where she began hurriedly packing a suitcase to flee town.

But with reports of fire all around them, the extended family decided instead to stay, tense and fearful. Looking out a back window, Dukic saw what she thought was a fire engine approaching through the trees.

"It turned out to be the bits of flame I could see through the smoke," she said. Soon a wall of fire was at the treeline at the back of their property, about 50 yards from the house.

With a neighbor, the adults spent the next few hours filling buckets with water and racing to the fence, soaking the property line.

When the fire eased and they felt the house was safe, they all headed to the fire station to take shelter for the rest of the night. On Sunday they took a convoy out of town, not returning until the road reopened Wednesday.

Amberley had been staying with her mother, Denson's ex-wife, Karen, fearing for their family's safety and offering prayers for them.

"There was a knock on my door on Sunday afternoon, and there they all were, black-faced and smelling like smoke," she said. "It was the best sight I'd ever seen."

The Densons admit they were lucky.

Each of them knows someone who died. On Paul Denson's street, it is believed that at least 20 people were killed. Dukic last saw a 21-year-old fellow employee at the grocery store who said she was leaving to see if neighbors needed help saving their horses; the woman and her sister died in that effort.

Days later, even little Beau remembers the terror of that night. "Smoke coming," he says, pointing to the trees behind his house.

Thousands of mostly volunteer firefighters were still battling more than a dozen fires across the state. Weather conditions were cool, but gusting winds constantly threatened efforts to get them under control. Forecasters said temperatures could rise again by the weekend.

Police said they were looking into rumors of looters at some destroyed houses in abandoned areas. It was not clear if those people owned the houses, or were searching for food, clothes or other necessities.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd ordered officials to loosen regulations that give survivors access to a package of $6.6 million in government cash payments. The Red Cross said its government-backed wildfire fund had received more than $22 million. Police and other organizations were collecting clothes, toys and housewares.

At Denson's home, his daughter searched for any usable housewares in the debris and turned up only a coffee mug, a large clay vase and a ceramic duck ornament.
Also discovered near the ruined Harley was a beer bottle — twisted and melted by the inferno.

The find brought a smile to Denson's weathered face for the first time Wednesday, and he said he would keep odd souvenir and display it in his next home.

Source

Sobering - posted by crsschk (), on: 2009/2/15 9:29
Dear Aaron, thank you for the earlier explanations, saw them at the time but didn't get around to responding ...

When I saw "gum trees" it really made much more sense. The winds ... the speed, just watching some of the video, hearing the reports of the sound, tornado like ...

In one of the earlier links there was a section of photos. One picture spoke so much and has stayed with me, haunted me if you will of a young boy seated in a car looking out the window, the expression of so much in his countenance ...