**EPA special operation targets Hunter mine dust**

 **News Release**

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The NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is mounting a special operation targeting Hunter Valley coal mines to tackle excessive dust levels.

EPA Acting Director Hunter Amiette Wakenshaw said Operation “Bust the Dust”, which is being conducted during spring and early summer, would put the Hunter’s coal mines under even closer scrutiny.

“Making mines keep dust levels contained is a priority for the EPA. Mines must properly control dust and comply with the strict conditions in place to safeguard their neighbours in the community as well as the environment.

“Mines have a duty to understand their environmental obligations and actively work to improve their environmental performance.”

During Operation “Bust the Dust”, EPA Officers are inspecting mines more frequently to check that extra dust controls are in place when there is a higher risk of dust, particularly on hot, dry and windy days that are typical in spring in the Hunter Valley.

“All coal mines are required by the EPA to minimise dust at all times. This includes modifying their mining operations during adverse weather to prevent dust from their activities impacting on the community,” Ms Wakenshaw said.

“While recent rain has provided some temporary relief, mines will need to take extra precautions when warm, dry, windy conditions return.

“These precautions may include avoiding high dumping of overburden, watering exposed areas, postponing blasting or ceasing operations.

“If mines are caught out, the EPA will take action.”