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TO: Grant County Healthcare Providers, School Nurses; Grant County Media

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT

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Grant County Air Quality Public Health Advisory

The Grant County Health District has issued an air advisory as a result of wildfire smoke effecting the air quality in Grant County and all of Washington. The air quality in Grant County is currently “Hazardous” and the smoke is not expected to clear over the next few days. Dr. Brzezny, the Grant County Health Officer, and GCHD endorse statewide recommendations following the air quality index (located below).

Poor air quality and wildfire smoke can impact people with asthma and other lung diseases, including especially children and older adults. Levels of pollutants that may not affect healthy people may cause breathing difficulties for people with other medical conditions. Additionally, wildfire smoke exposures can make people more susceptible to respiratory infections, likely including COVID-19. Poor air quality also makes symptoms and outcomes in people with respiratory infections more severe. People with, or recovering from, COVID-19 may be more at risk for negative health effects from wildfire smoke exposure.

To reduce the risks to all individuals, GCHD recommends the following:

- **If it looks smoky outside, it is not a good time for any outdoor activities.**
- Close windows and doors when it is smoky outside. Track the air quality and open your windows for fresh air when the air quality improves. Air quality readings as well as smoke forecasts can be found on the WA Smoke Blog: <https://wasmoke.blogspot.com/>
- If possible, set air conditioners on recirculate to prevent intake of outside air and increase the filtration in your home HVAC system to a MERV rating 13 filter with the deepest pleat your system can accommodate to reduce fine particles.
- Turn off fans that vent to the outside, like the one in your bathroom. Exhaust fans pull outside air in through cracks around windows and doors.
- Minimize the use of indoor air pollutants such as candles, incense, and wood burning stoves.
- Routinely check on children, the elderly and friends and family who have breathing problems when outdoor air quality is unhealthy.

Cloth face coverings and surgical masks do not necessarily filter PM 2.5 and cannot be relied on as a mitigation measure for smoke inhalation. It is best to stay indoors and keep indoor air clean. While cloth face coverings generally do not provide much protection from breathing in wildfire smoke, it



is important to continue to wear cloth face coverings to slow the spread of COVID-19 anytime you do leave your home.

For those people who must be outside, a commercial N95 or P100 mask that is properly fitted and worn correctly may provide some protection against outdoor wildfire smoke. While vented N95 masks would be acceptable for smoke, they do not prevent the transmission of COVID-19 by the person wearing it. Non-vented N95 mask or higher can be difficult to use and make it challenging for many to breathe. In addition, many steps are necessary to assure a good fit with such mask. Because of these concerns and because N95 and other NIOSH approved respirators are in short supply due to COVID-19, their use should be reserved for those who require them for work, especially in healthcare. The rest should minimize time outdoors only to essential tasks.

To help protect you and your family, you can make personal observations to determine outdoor air quality in your immediate surroundings.

- Face away from the sun.
- Determine the limit of your visibility range by looking at targets at known distances (miles). [Grant County Mapsifter](#) (To determine distances).
- The visible range is the point at which even high-contrast objects (e.g. a dark building or water tower viewed against the sky at noon) totally disappear.
- After determining visibility in miles, use the table below to identify potential health effects and appropriate cautionary activities.
- You can also get air quality readings from the WA Dept of Ecology’s Air Monitoring Network: <https://enviwa.ecology.wa.gov/home/map>

Helpful web sites

- [Washington Smoke Information](#)
- [National Weather Service Western Region](#)
- Washington State Department of Health – [Frequently Asked Questions about Smoke](#)
- [Department of Ecology Resource](#)

Visibility in Miles	Air Quality Index	Health Category	Health Effects and Actions to Take
10 or more	0-50	Good	None – it is a great day to be active outside.
5-10	51-100	Moderate	People with asthma, respiratory infection, diabetes, lung or heart disease, or have had a stroke should limit outdoor activities or do activities that take less effort, such as walking instead of running.
3-5	101-150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	Sensitive groups include people with asthma, respiratory infection, diabetes, lung, or heart disease, those who have had a stroke, infants, children, those older than 65, and pregnant women. These people should limit time spent outdoors.
1.5-3	151-200	Unhealthy	Everyone should limit time spent outdoors. Everyone should avoid exercising outdoors (including sports teams) and choose non-strenuous indoor activities. People with asthma, respiratory infection, diabetes, lung or heart disease, or have had a stroke should stay indoors. Infants, children, pregnant women and adults over age 65 should also stay indoors.

1-1.5	201-300	Very Unhealthy	Everyone should stay indoors, do only light activities, and keep windows closed if it is not too hot. Run air conditioners on re-circulate and close the outside air intake. Use indoor air cleaners with HEPA filters, if available. If you must be outdoors, wear an N-95 respirator mask. People with chronic diseases should check with their health care provider before wearing a mask. People with asthma, lung and heart disease, or have had a stroke should check with their healthcare provider for advice about leaving the area. Anyone with shortness of breath, wheezing, chest pain, heart palpitations, extreme fatigue, or difficulty moving or speaking should call their health care provider or call 911.
1 or less	301-500	Hazardous	Everyone should stay indoors, do only light activities, and keep windows closed if it is not too hot. See, “Very unhealthy above” and follow recommendations.

Printable version of the above air quality index attached.

Consultation

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