

Wilbur Ellis Facility Fire

Excavation of site scheduled for 10/29 – early morning.

Grant County, WA – Grant County, WA – The Grant County Health District is extending the Wilbur Ellis facility fire health advisory to a 2-mile radius of the site located at Road 1.3 and Road O SE, Moses Lake in response to excavation of the site scheduled for the morning of October 29th 2022.

The facility fire has been under control and monitored since it caught fire on October 23rd, 2022. The site continues to smolder, emitting smoke up to present day. The morning of October 29, 2022, contracted cleanup crews in partnership with Grant County Fire District #5, will work to extinguish smoldering debris and begin excavation of the site. Disruption of the smoldering debris has potential to generate excess particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), increase presence of sulfur dioxide (SO₂), and/or release additional gases or other unknown matter into the air. Crews will be on site during the excavation to continue monitoring the air.

Particulate matter refers to very small, microscopic particles that can be inhaled and may cause health concerns. These particles are small enough to inhale. PM_{2.5} are very small particles in smoke that are less than 2.5 micrometers (see graphic for comparison). This measurement is most valuable to protect health because these fine particles are small enough to be inhaled deep into the lungs and may even make it into your blood stream.

Visit the website below to view an Air Quality Index with recommendations regarding PM_{2.5} levels and reducing exposure.

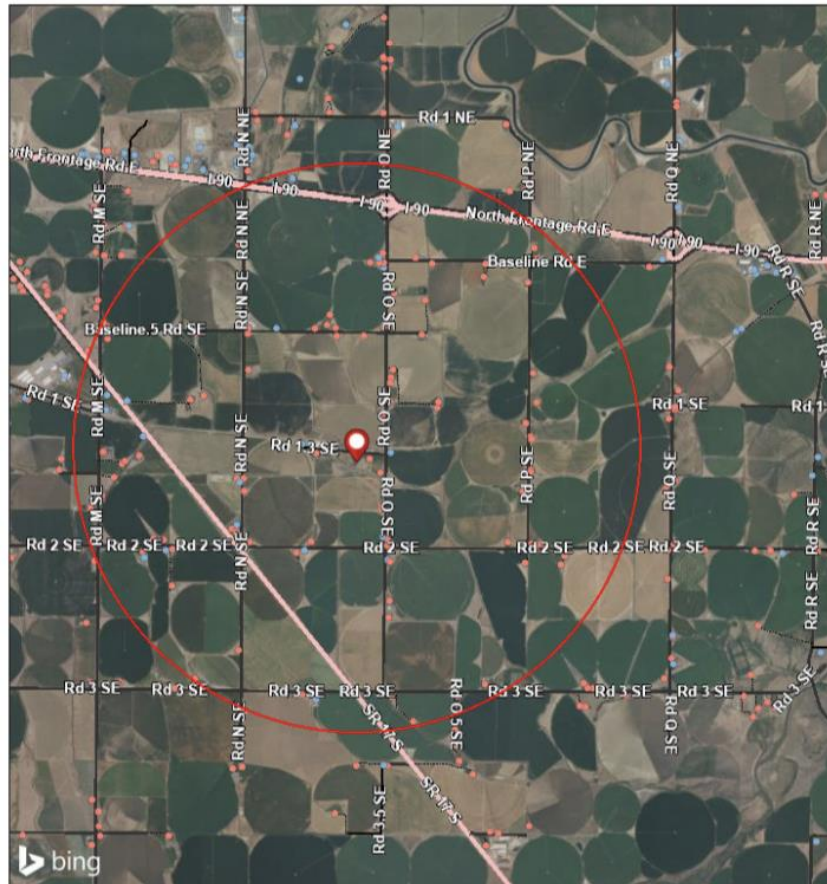
<https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/Documents/Pubs//334-332.pdf>

SO₂ is a colorless gas with a characteristic, irritating, pungent odor. SO₂ is a known byproduct of thermal decomposition of fertilizer products including those present at the site. Exposure to SO₂ may irritate the eyes, nose, and throat. SO₂ symptoms may include nasal congestion, eye irritation, burning or tearing, choking, cough, airway irritation such as wheezing, burning or shortness of breath. If you are experiencing symptoms or are concerned about exposure, please contact your healthcare provider.

GCHD is advising residents near the site to limit outdoor activity and be aware of any unusual or unexplained symptoms. At this time GCHD is not actively advising evacuation to residents in a close proximity to the site but encourages each homeowner to make an informed decision suitable for the needs of their family.

The public is asked to stay away from the immediate site and avoid any areas where you can see or smell smoke. If you must be in an area where smoke is visible, a well fitted KN95 mask will help protect you from particulate matter. However, these masks will not protect the public from gases, which includes SO₂.

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Particulate Size Comparison

