

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
8/18/2023TO: Grant Co Healthcare Providers,
Schools, Cities, and County Officials**FOR INFORMATION CONTACT**Stephanie Shopbell | Environmental Health Manager
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Air Quality Health Advisory

GRANT COUNTY, WA – Grant County Health District (GCHD) is issuing the following Air Quality Health Advisory for all areas of Grant County. We anticipate a persistent poor air-quality situation or a further decline in air quality conditions in Grant County as wildfires in Washington and British Columbia continue to affect the region. Air quality is expected to remain in the “Moderate” to “Unhealthy” range into the weekend.

GCHD urges healthcare providers to consider the impact of smoke exposure on patients residing in areas affected by wildfire smoke, with special emphasis on individuals more susceptible to experiencing complications. Follow relevant clinical principles when assessing smoke-exposed patients, for example the [Advanced Trauma Life Support \(ATLS\)](#) in patients who have spent time in close proximity to the fire source and exhibit signs of smoke inhalation or thermal injury.

Sensitive Groups - Poor air quality and inhaling wildfire smoke is unhealthy for all people but can significantly impact high risk groups. High risk (sensitive) groups include people with asthma and other lung diseases, those with heart conditions, infants, older adults, pregnant women, and children and youth. Smoke exposure, often minimally symptomatic in healthy people, may cause breathing difficulties in sensitive individuals and/or exacerbate respiratory, metabolic, and cardiovascular conditions like asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), ischemic heart disease and congestive heart failure.

Signs & Symptoms - The acute [signs and symptoms](#) of smoke exposure can include headache, eye and mucous membrane irritation, dyspnea (trouble breathing), cough, wheezing, chest pain, palpitations, and fatigue.

Reduce Risk – Healthcare providers should counsel patients on strategies to avoid or reduce smoke exposure, especially individuals that are at higher risk.

Grant County Health District recommends the following mitigation measures for all residents of Grant County during times of poor air quality:

- Check air quality conditions daily. <http://wasmoke.blogspot.com>. **Follow health recommendations found on the Air Quality Index**, including minimizing the time spent in unhealthy air. Actions to take are included in the tables below.
- Keep indoor air as clean as possible. Minimize the use of indoor air pollutants such as candles, incense, and gas /wood burning stoves.

- At home, consider installing filters with a MERV-13 rating or higher. These are best for filtering the particulates in wildfire smoke but may not be compatible with all HVAC systems. It is best to consult your systems manual or an HVAC professional before making changes.
 - Use “Recirculate” and “On” rather than “Auto” settings.
 - You can also use a HEPA portable indoor air cleaner in one or more rooms.
- Routinely check on children/youth, the elderly, and friends and family who have breathing problems when outdoor air quality is unhealthy for extended periods of time.
- Follow the advice of your doctor or other healthcare provider about medicines and your respiratory management plan if you have asthma or other illness affecting your lungs.
- When outdoors, use a filtering mask (generally N95 or, if not available, KN95) if tolerated.

An N95 mask that is properly fitted and worn correctly may provide some protection against outdoor wildfire smoke. A dust or surgical mask will NOT protect you from the fine particles present in wildfire smoke. For additional details on respirator use during periods of smoke, view DOH’s [Wildfire Smoke and Masks](#) fact sheet.

Avoid driving, when possible. If you must drive, keep the windows closed. Use the vehicle air conditioner and set filtration to recirculate. Most vehicles can recirculate the inside air which will help keep the smoky air out. You may have to shift from recirculating air to drawing in fresh air periodically. Smoke can also impact visibility.

For more recommendations and frequently asked questions visit Washington State Dept of Health’s Smoke & Wildfires page: <https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/air-quality/smoke-fires>

Table 1. Air Quality Index: Health Effects & Actions to Take

Visibility in Miles	Air Quality Index	Health Category	Health Effects and Actions to Take
10 or more	0-50	Good	None
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 heart or lung disease, asthma, diabetes, infants, children, adults older than 65, pregnant women, or who have had a stroke. 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.

Additional Resources for Cities, County, and School Officials-

[Updated guidance for "Washington Children and Youth Activities for Air Quality" Summary Wildfire Smoke Guidance for Canceling Outdoor Events or Activities](#)

Table 1. Washington Air Quality Guide for School and Child Care Activities (WA DOH)

Outside Air Quality Index (AQI): PM2.5					ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS	
Activity Duration	Good (0-50 AQI)	Moderate (51-100 AQI)	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (101-150 AQI)	Unhealthy, Very Unhealthy, or Hazardous (≥151 AQI)		
15 mins to 1 hour (e.g., recess, PE, classes typically held outside)	No restrictions.	Allow children and youth with health conditions to opt out or stay indoors. Limit intensity of activities for these children and youth if needed.	Limit to moderate intensity activities outside. For children and youth with health conditions, further limit intensity or move to an area with safer air quality if needed.	Cancel outdoor activity or move to an area with safer air quality, either indoors with filtered air or to a different location. Limit to light intensity activities indoors if indoor PM2.5 levels are elevated.		Close windows and doors when activities are moved indoors. Pay attention to heat.
1-4 hours (e.g., athletic events and practices)	No restrictions.	Allow children and youth with health conditions to opt out or stay indoors. Limit intensity of activities for these children & youth if needed.	Limit to light intensity activities or to a 1-hour total duration with moderate intensity activities. If intensity level and time cannot be modified, consider canceling outdoor activity or move to an area with safer air quality, either indoors or to a different location. For children & youth with health conditions, further limit time or intensity if needed.	Cancel outdoor activity or move to an area with safer air quality, either indoors with filtered air or to a different location. Limit to light intensity activities indoors if indoor PM2.5 levels are elevated.		Indoor air filtration can reduce elevated levels of indoor PM2.5. See Appendix C. To measure indoor PM2.5 levels, see Appendix B.
> 4 hours (e.g., outdoor school or programming, day camp, overnight camp)	No restrictions.	Move children and youth with health conditions to an area with safer air quality, either indoors or to a different location if needed. Allow children and youth without health conditions to opt out or stay indoors and limit intensity of activities.	Limit to light intensity activities and under 4-hr total duration. If intensity level and time cannot be modified, cancel outdoor activity, or move it to an area with safer air quality, either indoors or to a different location. For children and youth with health conditions, further limit time or intensity if needed.	Cancel outdoor activity or move to an area with safer air quality, either indoors with filtered air or to a different location. Limit to light intensity activities indoors if indoor PM2.5 levels are elevated.	Consider time spent in transit in activity duration.	
					All children and youth 18 and younger are considered a sensitive group. Health conditions include but are not limited to asthma and other lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, and respiratory infection (e.g., RSV and pneumonia).	

Media Release Source: CDC [Health Alert Network \(HAN\) - 00495 | HAN Title \(cdc.gov\)](#)

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