

**NEWS** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | July 21, 2021

## **Smoky conditions hamper air quality in the Red River Valley**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality (NDDEQ) has been closely monitoring air quality in the state due to fire activity throughout the nation and Canada. Although most of the state is within normal air quality limits, the Fargo and Grand Forks areas have experienced fluctuations dipping into unhealthy levels.

Wildfires in northern Canada, Oregon, Wyoming, and western Montana are sending smoke across North Dakota. “Smoke from distant fires has been following wind and weather patterns. Higher concentrations can sometime build in lower lying areas or where air stagnates. This is what we appear to be experiencing in eastern North Dakota,” said Jim Semerad, Director of Air Quality. High particulate numbers, coupled with higher temperatures over the next few days, could heighten the complications. **People reacting to smoke to the extent that it is affecting breathing should immediately seek help from a medical provider.**

The NDDEQ advises Red River Valley residents, especially those with respiratory conditions, the elderly, and children, to limit their outdoor exposure while smoky conditions remain. Extremely small particles of ash and soot, or particulate matter, have been increasing over the last few hours across eastern North Dakota. Particulate matter can irritate the respiratory system, especially for those who suffer from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or conditions such as asthma and allergies. Please note that concentrations continue to be variable in both location and degree.

Residents should visit <https://airnow.gov> to view real-time air quality conditions for their area and tips on respiratory protection to plan accordingly.

As the NDDEQ Division of Air Quality monitors and investigates the situation, the department will follow up with additional information.

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