

**NEWS** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | July 30, 2021

## **Department of Environmental Quality urges North Dakotans to monitor air quality and take protective measures during smoky conditions**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality advises the public to take precautions due to unhealthy levels of wildfire smoke circulating throughout the state. This smoke is being carried by current wind and weather patterns. The air quality index in our state has generally been ranging from moderate (yellow) to unhealthy (red).

In general, we advise everyone to use common sense and avoid prolonged exposure outdoors. Elderly persons, children, and individuals with heart or lung disease are particularly susceptible to ash particles and should take extra precautions to avoid exposure. Smoke can irritate the eyes and airways, causing coughing, a dry scratchy throat, and irritated sinuses. Elevated particulate matter in the air can trigger wheezing in those who suffer from respiratory conditions, such as asthma or emphysema/COPD.

If you see or smell smoke, protect your health by avoiding exposure:

- If possible, stay inside with windows and doors closed until smoke levels subside.
- Reduce outside physical activity.
- Set air conditioning units and car vent systems to re-circulate to prevent outside air from moving inside.

What you should do depends on the air quality index and your personal health status. Due to the active wildfires and changing wind patterns, air quality can be variable and unpredictable. Air quality may improve at times or get worse very quickly. We strongly recommend checking the latest air quality data for your area by searching your location at [AirNow.gov](https://www.airnow.gov). The air quality index color indicators are:

*(continued)*

QI	Air Pollution Level	Health Implications	Cautionary Statement (for PM2.5)
0 - 50	Good	Air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk	None
51 -100	Moderate	Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.	Active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should limit prolonged outdoor exertion.
101-150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.	Active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should limit prolonged outdoor exertion.
151-200	Unhealthy	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects	Active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should avoid prolonged outdoor exertion; everyone else, especially children, should limit prolonged outdoor exertion
201-300	Very Unhealthy	Health warnings of emergency conditions. The entire population is more likely to be affected.	Active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should avoid all outdoor exertion; everyone else, especially children, should limit outdoor exertion.
300+	Hazardous	Health alert: everyone may experience more serious health effects	Everyone should avoid all outdoor exertion

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