

NEWS | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | August 16, 2021

Department of Environmental Quality urges caution as wildfire smoke impacts western North Dakota

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality (NDDEQ) advises residents to consider limiting prolonged outdoor activities while smoky conditions fluctuate across the state. Wildfires located in the western portion of the United States and in Canada are sending smoke across North Dakota.

Extremely small particles of ash and soot, or particulate matter, have increased over the last few hours across the western part of the state. 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. The NDDEQ advises people with respiratory conditions, the elderly, and young children to avoid prolonged outdoor exposure.

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 affects breathing should seek immediate help from a medical provider.

The NDDEQ's Division of Air Quality is closely monitoring its air sampling network across North Dakota. Although most of the smoke impact currently seems to be concentrated in the western part of the state, weather conditions could push smoke to other portions of the state in the next several days.

As the drought continues, these conditions will likely reoccur over the coming weeks. For up-to-date information on the region's current air quality and tips on respiratory protection during a smoke event, visit airnow.gov. Tune into your local weather station for additional information.

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