

**NEWS** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | Aug. 29, 2023

## **Department of Environmental Quality urges caution during smoky conditions**

BISMARCK, N.D. – As Canadian wildfires continue to send smoke across the state, the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality advises residents, especially those with respiratory conditions, to consider limiting prolonged outdoor activities. Continue to monitor the Air Quality Index (AQI) throughout the remainder of the week with the AirNow phone app and your local media stations.

Environmental Quality closely monitors its air sampling network across the state, which feeds monitoring data into AirNow so the public is informed and able to take any necessary precautions. For up-to-date information on the region's air quality and respiratory protection tips during a smoke event, visit [fire.airnow.gov](https://fire.airnow.gov).

Currently, particulate matter, or tiny particles of ash and soot in the smoke, is pushing the AQI into unhealthy, very unhealthy, or even hazardous categories in parts of the state. The AQI color codes are:

- Red (Unhealthy) – Keep outdoor activities light and short. Go indoors if you have symptoms.
- Purple (Very Unhealthy) – limit all outdoor physical activity, and go indoors for cleaner air if you don't feel well.
- Maroon (Hazardous) – Avoid all outdoor physical activity. If you are hot, go someplace with air conditioning.

Environmental Quality advises everyone to use common sense when wildfire smoke adversely impacts air quality. People reacting to smoke to the extent that it affects breathing should seek immediate help from a medical provider. Please direct general health-related smoke questions to the Health and Human Services Operating Center at (701) 328-0707.

If you see or smell smoke, ways to protect your health include:

- Staying inside with windows and doors closed until smoke levels subside.
- Reducing outside physical activity.
- Setting 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.

## **Additional Resources**

- Air Quality Index: <https://www.airnow.gov> also check the AirNow Fire and smoke Map
- Air Quality Monitoring Information: <https://deq.nd.gov/AQ/monitoring/>
- General Smoke-related Health Questions: (701) 328-0707
- Weather Forecasting: <https://graphical.weather.gov/sectors/northdakota.php>
- Wildfire Smoke Prediction Patterns: <https://firesmoke.ca/forecasts/current/>
- Tune into local media sources for updates in your area.
- *Questions about the continuation of outdoor activities, events, and sports practice should be directed to the local administrators in charge.*

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### **For more information, contact:**

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