

NEWS | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | July 22, 2024

Department of Environmental Quality urges caution during smoky conditions

BISMARCK, N.D. – Smoke originating from wildfires in the Western United States and Canada continues to affect air quality across North Dakota. The North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality advises residents, particularly those with respiratory conditions, to consider limiting prolonged outdoor activities. Environmental Quality recommends monitoring the Air Quality Index (AQI) with the AirNow phone app and tuning into local media stations.

Environmental Quality closely monitors its statewide air sampling network, which contributes data into AirNow, ensuring the public is well-informed and can take necessary precautions. For up-to-date information on the region's air quality and respiratory protection during smoky conditions, visit fire.airnow.gov.

Revised in May 2024, the AQI color designations now include updated ranges for indicators:

- Yellow – Moderate
- Orange – Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups
- Red – Unhealthy
- Purple – Very Unhealthy
- Maroon – Hazardous

Given air quality variability due to active wildfires and changing wind patterns, Environmental Quality advises using common sense when smoke levels are high. Individuals experiencing significant breathing difficulties due to smoke should seek immediate medical attention. General health-related smoke inquiries can be directed to the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services Operations Center at (701) 328-0707.

To protect your health when smoke is present:

- Stay inside with windows and doors closed until smoke levels decrease.
- Reduce outside physical activity.
- Use air conditioning units and car vent systems set to recirculate to prevent drawing in outside air.

Decisions regarding outdoor activities should be based on AQI levels and individual health. Due to the active wildfires and changing wind patterns, air quality can be variable and

unpredictable. Air quality fluctuates unexpectedly, improving or deteriorating rapidly.

Additional Resources

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

For more information, contact:

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