

NEWS | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | September 9, 2024

Department of Environmental Quality urges caution during smoky conditions

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality is actively monitoring wildfires in the western United States and Canada. Based on current weather patterns, residents across the state may experience intermittent smoke over the next few days. Environmental Quality advises residents, especially those with respiratory conditions, to consider limiting prolonged outdoor activities when smoky conditions exist at their location.

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

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

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

Environmental Quality advises everyone to use common sense when wildfire smoke adversely impacts air quality. When air quality is in the “unhealthy for sensitive groups” to “unhealthy” range, people who are in sensitive groups (including those with respiratory conditions, the elderly and young children) may experience health effects during outdoor activities. To decrease the potential for health issues, sensitive groups of people should limit prolonged or strenuous outdoor activity. People reacting to smoke to the extent that it affects breathing should seek immediate help from a medical provider. What you should do depends on the air quality index and your personal health status.

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

- Staying indoors with windows and doors closed until smoke levels decrease.
- Reducing outdoor physical activity.
- Setting air conditioning units and car vents to re-circulate to prevent outdoor air from entering.

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For real-time information on air quality and respiratory protection during smoke events, visit fire.airnow.gov. The AirNow mobile app and many weather apps also provide air quality updates.

Additional Resources

- Air Quality Index: <https://www.airnow.gov> (including the AirNow Fire and Smoke Map)
- Air Quality Monitoring Information: <https://deq.nd.gov/AQ/monitoring/>
- Weather Forecasting: <https://graphical.weather.gov/sectors/northdakota.php>
- Wildfire Smoke Prediction Patterns: <https://firesmoke.ca/forecasts/current/>
- *Questions about outdoor activities, events, and sports practice, contact the local administrators in charge.*

For more information, contact:

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