



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

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NEWS RELEASE--FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Planning to be outside this weekend? Reduce your exposure to smoke from wildfires

Air quality continues to be problematic for most of the state, and public health officials are reminding Idaho residents to take precautions this weekend when they are outside. Most communities are experiencing air quality in the “unhealthy for sensitive groups” range, and several are in the “unhealthy for everyone” range. Conditions are not expected to change significantly through the weekend.

“It’s getting more difficult to escape areas with poor air quality because it’s so widespread, so it’s important to be aware and adjust your level of exertion if you’re outdoors this weekend,” said Jim Vannoy, health program manager for the Department of Health and Welfare.

People exposed to smoke may experience coughing and shortness of breath. Older adults, infants, children and people with medical conditions such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and heart disease are more affected. People who use inhalers for asthma or other conditions should keep them nearby. Everyone is advised to seek medical treatment for uncontrolled coughing, wheezing, choking, or if breathing difficulty continues once they are indoors.

To reduce exposure to smoke to protect people’s health, public health officials advise:

- Everyone should avoid heavy work or exercise outdoors when the air quality index reaches unhealthy levels.

- Older adults, small children, and those with respiratory conditions or heart disease may be more sensitive to poor air quality and should stay indoors and avoid heavy work when air quality reaches unhealthy levels.
- Stay well-hydrated by drinking plenty of water. Staying hydrated helps dilute phlegm in the respiratory tract, making it easier to cough out smoke particles. Plan to cough; it is nature's way of clearing your lungs. Avoid caffeine products, sugary drinks and alcohol because they have a dehydrating effect.
- Stay cool if the weather is warm. Run your air conditioner to re-circulate air. Turn the fan blower to manual so it continuously filters the air in your home.
- For homes without a central heating and/or cooling system, use portable air purifiers to remove particles (air purifiers that utilize HEPA filters are best; avoid using air purifiers that produce ozone). Visit places in your community that have air conditioning, such as a library.
- If you wear contact lenses, switch to eyeglasses in a smoky environment.

Not all areas of the state have air quality monitors, so people are encouraged to be cautious if visibility is affected because of smoke and particulates from wildfires. If visibility is reduced to less than eight miles, sensitive groups should limit activity. If visibility is reduced to less than three miles, air quality is considered unhealthy for everyone. Visibility of less than one mile is considered hazardous and everyone should avoid all physical activity outdoors.

The departments of Health and Welfare and Environmental Quality have issued guidelines for schools and community event organizers, which are available [here](#).

Daily updates on air quality conditions at various locations in Idaho are available on Department of Environmental Quality's [Air Quality Reports and Forecasts webpage](#). For areas where air quality monitors are not available, the [Visibility Range and AQI Table](#) can help determine the necessary precautions to take. Read current [wildfire smoke information](#) and find more tips.

Find out more about how smoke might be affecting your children at <http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Health/EnvironmentalHealth/tabid/95/Default.aspx>

More information on how to protect against wildfire smoke and other tips

from the Centers for Disease Control is available on <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/wildfires/>.

Information on the fires in your area is available on www.inciweb.org