



News Release

Headline: SWCAA extends air pollution advisory for wildfire smoke for all of Southwest Washington including Clark, Cowlitz, Lewis, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties

Release Date: Friday, September 18, 2020

Persistent unhealthy levels of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) in Southwest Washington due to wildfire smoke throughout Clark, Cowlitz, Lewis, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties have prompted the Southwest Clean Air Agency to extend the air pollution advisory through Saturday. Rain and improving conditions reduced air pollution levels significantly overnight and conditions are expected to continue to improve. However, some unhealthy conditions and smoke may continue to linger into the weekend.

Smoke levels can change rapidly depending on weather patterns and fire conditions. Not all areas will be impacted to the same extent. The Southwest Clean Air Agency will continue to monitor conditions and update this advisory as necessary.

Visit the Washington Smoke-Blog for more detailed information: <http://wasmoke.blogspot.com/>

Current air quality information is available at: <http://www.swcleanair.org/burning/airquality.asp>

The Air Quality Index rates air quality based on labels of “good” (0 to 50, green), “moderate” (51 to 100, yellow), “unhealthy for sensitive groups” (101-150, orange), and “unhealthy” (151-200, red), and “very unhealthy” (201 to 300, deep red). Any reading above 300 is “hazardous.” Smoke levels (PM_{2.5}) levels are expected to reach into the “unhealthy” range throughout Southwest Washington.

While residents can view current air quality conditions at <http://www.swcleanair.org>, SWCAA’s monitoring network does not capture air quality conditions in all communities. For this reason, it’s important for residents to gauge air quality conditions where they live and take appropriate actions to protect themselves. Remember, local smoke levels can rise and fall rapidly, depending on weather factors including wind direction.

Wildfire smoke can cause a range of health problems:

- Chest pain
- Fast heartbeat
- Coughing
- Stinging eyes

- Asthma attack
- Trouble breathing
- Irritated sinuses
- Headaches

Sensitive groups should take precautions, including: children, older adults, and people that are pregnant, have heart or lung issues (such as asthma and COPD), or that have had a stroke.

- Stay indoors when possible.
- Limit your physical activity outdoors, such as running, bicycling, physical labor, and sports.
- Close windows in your home, if possible, and keep the indoor air clean. If you have an air conditioner, use the "recirculation" switch. Use an indoor air filter if available.
- If you do not have an air conditioner, consider finding a public place with clean, air-conditioned indoor air like a public library or a community center.
- Avoid driving, when possible. If you must drive, keep the windows closed. If you use the car's fan or air conditioning, make sure the system recirculates air from inside the car; don't pull air from outside.
- Schools and daycare providers should consider postponing outdoor activities or moving them indoors.
- N95 or N100 rated masks can help protect some people from air pollution. However, these masks are currently in short supply and may not be readily available. Please check with your doctor to see what actions are appropriate for you.

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Pubs/334-353.pdf>.

- For more information on ways to reduce your exposure, see the Washington Department of Health's web site:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/AirQuality/SmokeFromFires>

As always, consult with your health care provider for more specific questions and concerns.

For weather information visit the National Weather Service website at: www.nws.noaa.gov

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