



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH & WELFARE**



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**NEWS RELEASE--FOR IMMEDIATE  
RELEASE**

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**Idaho Public Health and DEQ officials:  
Wildfire smoke is affecting air quality throughout  
the state**

Smoke from wildfires in Idaho and neighboring states is affecting the air quality in nearly every Idaho community in the northern and southwestern parts of the state, and officials from public health and environmental quality are reminding residents to be aware of the conditions so they can take precautions.

The strongest smoke impacts are currently occurring across the Latah, Nez Perce, Lewis, Clearwater, and Idaho counties, as well as in southwest Idaho and east toward Twin Falls and north toward Garden Valley and McCall. Air quality is ranging from moderate to unhealthy across these areas, and impacts are from ongoing fires burning in Oregon, Washington and California, and a multitude of local fires that started this week.

"Air quality throughout the state is changing depending on weather patterns and wildfire activity," said Jim Vannoy, environmental health manager for the Department of Health and Welfare. "Idahoans should be aware of this and check air quality on a regular basis so they can take precautions if they are planning to be outside. We're especially concerned about children, the elderly and people with chronic health conditions who might be more sensitive than most to the smoke in the air."

Older adults, infants, children and people with medical conditions such as asthma, lung disease, and heart disease are more sensitive to poor air quality. People who use inhalers for asthma or other conditions should keep them close at hand. Everyone is advised to seek medical treatment for uncontrolled coughing, wheezing, choking, or if breathing difficulties continues after they move indoors.

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

- 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 the unhealthy for sensitive groups level.
- Everyone should avoid heavy work or exercise outdoors when the air quality index reaches unhealthy levels.
- Visibility can help determine air quality if there is no monitor in your area. If visibility is reduced to less than five 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.
- 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.

Daily updates on air quality conditions at various locations in Idaho are available on the 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. For more complete information about wildfires in your area visit the [Idaho Smoke Information Blog](#).

For more information on protecting your health from wildfire smoke, visit Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's [Wildfire Smoke and Your Health](#) webpage.