

Smoke Complaints - Eastern Wisconsin

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Department of Health Services (DHS) are receiving numerous calls from local health departments and citizens in eastern Wisconsin about heavy smoke odors, ash and concerns about smoke inhalation. The smoke moving through the area is from a large [wild fire in Pagami Creek, MN](#). A satellite image of the smoke plume can be seen [here](#).

- Short-term, elevated fine particle (PM2.5) values were noted overnight on the Forest County PM2.5 monitor; the smoke plume has now moved south and east.
- DNR issues PM2.5 advisories when the 24-hour standard (an average of hourly measurements) is exceeded. DNR monitors are showing hourly peaks above the standard, but the 24-hour average is not being exceeded so no advisories have been issued. From the perspective of DNR, temporary peaks in PM2.5 can cause problems in sensitive individuals (those with chronic lung or cardiovascular disease) even if the 24-hour standard has not been exceeded.
- DNR is [monitoring the values](#) and aware of this smoke incident and will issue advisories if necessary.
- DHS is aware of this smoke incident and working with local health departments and the DNR to get information out to the public.
- In healthy people, symptoms of smoke exposure usually include irritation of eyes, nose and throat, or breathing discomfort, and more severe symptoms may include chest tightness, wheezing, shortness of breath, and coughing. Smoke exposure can aggravate chronic lung or cardiovascular disease.
- Depending on the smoke concentrations and an individual's sensitivity to smoke, actions to take include remaining indoors with the doors and windows closed, using a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter on air conditioners, reducing other sources of indoor air pollution and leaving the area if an individual has particular sensitivity.

Listen for news updates on the smoke in your area. Continue to follow all precautions and instructions given by local health and governmental departments.

Contacts:

Primary contact: Dr. Rob Thiboldeaux, DHS (608) 267-6844
Email: Robert.thiboldeaux@dhs.wisconsin.gov

Other: Bart Sponseller, DNR (608) 266-1058
Email: bart.sponseller@wisconsin.gov

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What is Smoke?

Smoke is made up of a complex mixture of gases and fine particles produced when wood and other organic matter burn. A major health threat from smoke comes from fine particles (also called particle pollution, particulate matter, or PM). These microscopic particles can get into your eyes and respiratory system, where they can cause health problems such as burning eyes, runny nose, and illnesses such as bronchitis.

Symptoms of Smoke Exposure

In healthy people, symptoms of smoke exposure usually include irritation of eyes, nose and throat, or breathing discomfort. More severe symptoms may include chest tightness, wheezing, shortness of breath, and coughing. If you have asthma, a chronic lung disease, or cardiovascular disease, smoke exposure can aggravate these conditions. In smoky conditions, if you develop symptoms which do not respond to your usual medication, see your health care provider immediately. Prolonged exposure to smoke of all kinds is harmful to people of all ages. Like cigarette smoke, smoke from fires can eventually damage your body's ability to remove large particles and excess phlegm from your lungs and airway. However, the healthy lung has a great ability to recover from the effects of smoke, provided there is time to recover.

Recommendations

Visible smoke near your home can be hazardous, especially if you already have breathing problems or are sensitive to smoke. The local health department makes the following recommendations:

1. If you are sensitive to smoke, evacuate the area if you can. If you choose to stay, remain indoors with the doors and windows closed.
2. If available, use a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter on your air conditioner to reduce the amount of smoke pulled into your home from the outdoors. A HEPA filter may reduce the number of irritating fine particles in indoor air.
3. During high temperatures, older individuals or those in frail health who do not have an air conditioner are advised to stay with family members or friends who do.
4. Reduce other sources of indoor air pollution such as smoking cigarettes or burning incense.
5. Recognize the symptoms of smoke exposure and pay attention to visibility.
6. For severe shortness of breath, chest pain, decreased mental function or other life-threatening conditions, call 911 immediately.
7. Listen for news updates on the fire and smoke in your area. Continue to follow all precautions and instructions given by fire management authorities.

[Adapted from US EPA and NM Department of Health fact sheets]