

SMOKEY SKIES BULLETIN - AUGUST 27, 2018

After a couple of clear days, the smoke has returned. Some smoke cover is expected as the wind direction changes and also can occur from a temperature inversion.

It is important to remember that the return of this smoke doesn't mean that fire activity has increased in this area. Smoke conditions can change quickly over short distances and can vary considerably hour-by-hour.

Smoke is a natural part of our environment but it is important to be mindful that exposure to smoke may affect your health.

People with pre-existing health conditions, the elderly, infants, children and sensitive individuals are more likely to experience health effects from smoke exposure.

During smoky conditions

Follow your common sense

- Stop or reduce your activity level if breathing becomes difficult or you feel unwell.
- Stay cool and drink plenty of fluids.
- Carry any rescue medications with you at all times.
- Make sure that children and others who cannot care for themselves follow the same advice.

Monitor your symptoms

- Different people have different responses to smoke. Mild irritation and discomfort are common, and usually disappear when the smoke clears.
- People with asthma or other chronic illness should activate the personal care plans they have designed with their family physicians.
- If you are unsure whether you need medical care, call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1.
- If you are experiencing difficulty in breathing, chest pain or discomfort, or a severe cough, contact your health care provider, walk-in clinic, or emergency department.
- If you are having a medical emergency, call 9-1-1.

Tips to reduce your exposure

- Smoke levels may be lower indoors but will still be elevated, so stay aware of your symptoms even when you are indoors.
- Running a commercially available HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filter can improve indoor air quality in the room where the device is located.
- If you have a forced air heating/cooling system in your home, it may help to change the filter and set the fan to run continuously.
- Reduce indoor air pollution sources such as smoking, burning incense, and frying foods.
- Consider going to a library, community center, or shopping mall with cooler filtered air to get some relief from the smoke.
- If travelling in a car with air conditioning, keep the windows up and the ventilation set to recirculate.

- If you are very sensitive to smoke, consider moving to another location with cleaner air, but be aware that conditions can change rapidly.
- Maintaining good overall health is a good way to prevent health effects resulting from short-term exposure to air pollution.

More information

For general information about wildfires, smoke and your health, contact HealthLink BC:

- Phone 8-1-1 (toll free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week), or Check the Wildfire and Your Health webpage at <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-feature/wildfires>
- The current Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) and other air quality information is available at the BC Air Quality website, <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/bcairquality/readings>
- Forecasts of smoke levels over the next 48 hours are available from the Environment and Climate Change Canada Fire prediction system, https://weather.gc.ca/firework/index_e.html
- If you need to work outdoors in smoky conditions, material can be found at the WorkSafe BC Wildfire FAQ website, <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/information-sheets/wildfire-smoke-frequently-asked-questions-faq>
- First Nations Health Authority: <http://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/environmental-health/wildfire-information>
- Interior Health Authority: For resources related to forest fire smoke exposure, air quality, food safety when the power is out and ensuring your drinking water is safe visit <http://www.interiorhealth.ca> (Environment Tab/Emergency Information)