



# Public Health

## Idaho North Central District

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## Public Health *Advisory...*

### Wildfire Smoke Advisory August 8, 2014

As we move into late summer here in North Central Idaho, we are also moving into the time of year that wildfires continue to increase. That means that wildfire smoke and the impact on air quality is going to become a concern.

People exposed to smoke may experience symptoms such as 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 often more affected. People who use inhalers for asthma or other conditions should keep them close at hand. People are advised to seek medical treatment for uncontrolled coughing, wheezing, choking, or if they have difficulty breathing once they move back indoors.

**To reduce your exposure to smoke and protect your 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.
- Drink plenty of water. Staying hydrated helps dilute phlegm in the respiratory tract, making it easier to cough out smoke particles. Plan on coughing; 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 recirculate air. Turn the fan blower on manually 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 areas 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.

Daily updates on air quality conditions at various locations in Idaho are available on DEQ'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 at <http://www.idsmoke.blogspot.com/>.

For more information in north central Idaho on wildfire smoke, air quality or potential health impacts of wildfire smoke, you may also contact: Amber Rand, Air Quality Manager with the Department of Environmental Quality at 208-799-4370; Julie Simpson, Air Quality Program Coordinator with the Nez Perce Tribe at 800-720-4089; or Ed Marugg, Environmental Health Director with Public Health-Idaho North Central District at 208-799-0356.