



1200 Washington Ave, Bay City, Michigan 48708
<http://www.baycounty-mi.gov/Health>

989-895-4009, PHONE
989-895-2083, FAX
989-895-4049, TDD

James A. Barcia
Bay County Executive

Joel R. Strasz
Public Health Officer

Thomas John Bender, MD, PhD
Medical Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To: All Media
From: Joel Strasz, Public Health Officer – Bay County Health Department
Date: June 27, 2023
Re: **BCHD Recommends Caution as Air Quality Index Categorized as Unhealthy**

BAY COUNTY, MICHIGAN – The Bay County Health Department recommends everyone reduce long or intense outdoor activities and take frequent breaks. Bay County is one of many counties under an air quality alert for today, Tuesday, June 27 and forecasted for tomorrow, Wednesday, June 28 as well.

According to AirNow.gov, Bay City is forecasted to move between Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups to Very Unhealthy for everyone for particulate matter 2.5. Particulate matter is the primary pollutant of concern from wildfire smoke and tend to be very small (2.5 micrometers) and is able to get deep into the lungs and can even pass directly into the bloodstream. For reference, a strand of hair is 50-70 micrometers. The health effects of particle pollution exposure can range from relatively minor (e.g., eye and respiratory tract irritation) to more serious health effects (e.g., exacerbation of asthma and heart failure, and even premature death).

People with heart or lung disease, older adults, children and teenagers, minority populations, and outdoor workers should avoid long or intense outdoor activities. Consider rescheduling or moving activities indoors. Watch for symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath. For people with asthma, follow your action plan and keep quick relief medicine handy. For people with heart disease, symptoms such as palpitations, shortness of breath, or unusual fatigue may indicate a serious problem. If you have any of these, contact your health care provider.

In addition to the AirNow recommendations above, those who want to limit the risk of health effects from wildfire smoke can take these additional steps to stay healthy:

- Stay inside with doors and windows closed using MERV-13 or better air filtration.
- Seek shelter elsewhere if you do not have an air conditioner and it is too warm to stay inside with the windows closed. If you don't know where to go or need help, call or text 211 to find a shelter.
- Use air filters to improve indoor air quality. Use a high efficiency filter to capture fine particles no matter whether you have central air conditioning or a portable room unit. Set the system to "on" instead of "auto" so the air is being filtered regularly.
 - If you do not have central air or a portable unit, you can construct a temporary box fan filter with the instructions here: <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/protecting-yourself-wildfire-smoke>
- Do not add to indoor air pollution. Do not burn candles or use gas, propane, woodburning stoves, fireplaces, or aerosol sprays.
- Consider using a N95 or KN95 mask. Cloth masks or bandanas will be unreliable in protecting you from the particulate matter 2.5 from wildfire smoke.
- Reduce outdoor air pollution: Consider rescheduling any burning or activities that add dust, smoke, and particulate matter to the air.

BCHD expects smoke from wildfires to be an on-going issue that will continue into the future as wildfires become more common.

Free KN95 masks are available to anyone from the public that requests one by visiting the Bay County Health Department during normal business hours.

To learn more about the Health Effects attributed to wildfire smoke, visit the EPA's website:
<https://www.epa.gov/wildfire-smoke-course/health-effects-attributed-wildfire-smoke>.

To learn more about fire safety and to prevent wildfires, visit Michigan's website:
<Michigan.gov/PreventWildfires>.

If you want to sign up to receive Air Quality Forecasts, visit AirNow's EnviroFlash website:
<https://www.enviroflash.info/signup.cfm>. Or you can download their App from either the iPhone or Android App store.

If you have questions about air quality or any of our services, please contact the Bay County Health Department at (989) 895-4009, Monday through Friday, 8am-5pm, or on Facebook or Instagram @BayCountyHD.

####