

Environment and health departments issue smoke advisory

Written by Staff Reports
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The New Mexico Environment Department and New Mexico Department of Health [on June 15] issued a smoke advisory for areas of New Mexico that may be affected by smoke from fires currently burning in New Mexico and Arizona.

Smoke from the Dog Head Fire west of Estancia and the North Fire south of Magdalena is affecting air quality throughout central New Mexico. Hot, dry, and stagnant forecasted weather is expected to contribute to increased smoke concentrations especially in central New Mexico throughout the upcoming weekend.

“Smoke can hurt your eyes, irritate your respiratory system, and aggravate chronic heart and lung problems,” Department of Health Cabinet Secretary Lynn Gallagher said. “People with heart and/or lung disease, adults over age 65, young children, and pregnant women should minimize outdoor activities during times when the visibility is about 5 miles or less. Be sure you have the medicines needed for chronic heart or lung disease. When the visibility starts to go below three miles, sensitive groups should avoid outdoor activities until air quality improves.”

The New Mexico Environment Department operates air quality monitors at multiple locations around the state. The monitors gather information about air quality conditions and help to keep the public informed. Data from the Environment Department air monitors can be found at: drdasnm1.alink.com.

The US Forest Service also has a temporary air quality monitor in Magdalena and is evaluating additional monitoring locations to assess areas affected by the Dog Head Fire. Monitoring data for US Forest Service monitors can be found at: app.airsis.com/USFS.

Because air quality monitors are not everywhere, the eyes are the best tools to determine if it is safe to be outside. Even if the smell of smoke is apparent, the air quality may still be good. As a rule of thumb, if visibility is over five miles, the air quality is generally good. However, no matter how far one can see, if individuals are having health effects from smoke exposure, they are advised to take extra care to stay inside or get to an area with better air quality, and to also see a doctor or healthcare professional as needed.

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For guidance on distances and visibility, please visit nmtracking.org/fire, which includes three maps with examples. For more information about fires in New Mexico, visit: nmfireinfo.com. Information on fires in Arizona and throughout the US is available at: inciweb.nwcg.gov .