

SUSANA MARTINEZ, GOVERNORDavid Martin, *Cabinet Secretary*Raj Solomon, P.E., *Deputy Secretary***NEWS RELEASE****May 11, 2011****Contact:** Jill Turner, Communications Coordinator (505)222-9548 / jill.turner@state.nm.us**Environment and Health Departments Issue Smoke Advisory**

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) today issued a smoke advisory for areas of New Mexico affected by smoke from multiple wildfires in New Mexico, Arizona and Mexico. Based on current extreme drought conditions, it is possible that smoke in the region could persist until the monsoon season.

When smoke levels are within the unhealthy range (see table below) or worse, the Department of Health has 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. Do not use swamp coolers when there are high levels of smoke outdoors because the cooler will pull the smoke indoors.
3. During high temperatures, older individuals or those in frail health who do not have an air conditioner should 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.

The NMED Air Quality Bureau operates equipment monitors at multiple locations around the state. These equipment monitors gather information about air quality conditions and help to keep the public informed. Data from those monitors can be found at <http://air.nmenv.state.nm.us/>. The Forest Service also operates some equipment monitors in New Mexico near specific wildfires. Data from these monitors is available at <http://www.satguard.com/usfs/default.asp>. Go to the Real Time Data link on this site.

In areas without air quality monitoring equipment, visibility can serve as a good substitute in determining air quality. The following chart includes guidelines for determining air quality from visibility.

Visibility Category	Visibility in Miles
Good	10 miles and up
Moderate	6 to 9
Unhealthy for Sensitive People	3 to 5
Unhealthy	1½ to 2½
Very Unhealthy	1 to 1¼
Hazardous	¾ mile or less

Procedure for Making Personal Observation to Determine Smoke Concentrations

- Face away from the sun
- Determine the limit of your visibility range by looking for targets at known distances (miles). Visible range is that point at which even the high contrast objects totally disappear
- After determining visibility in miles, use the chart to determine the appropriate visibility category.
- For further information on the impacts of smoke to health, go to NMED's Web page: <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/aqb>, or contact Jill Turner, NMED Communications Coordinator, at (505) 222-9548 or Chris Minnick, NMDOH Communications Director at (575) 649-0754.

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