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Wildfire Resources Help New Mexicans Protect Themselves from Smoke Hazards

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health and Environment Department continue to track the Assayii Lake Fire along the McKinley/San Juan county line in New Mexico. The departments advise residents in areas vulnerable to wildfire to learn how to reduce risk to themselves and their families from smoke exposure.

The Assayii Lake Fire has grown to at least 12,000 acres and continues to produce thin smoke that is moving NE into Colorado. This should limit the smoke exposure among residents in New Mexico. However, residents need to pay close attention to visibility in case wind conditions change.

The Department of Health has prepared a website, <https://nmtracking.org/fire> with information to help you protect your health and plan your actions during emergencies.

“Visibility is an easy way to decide if it’s okay to go outside. Use the [5-3-1 Visibility Method](#) to determine if smoke might impact your health,” said Department of Health Secretary Retta Ward, MPH. “First, decide if the visibility is closer to five miles, three miles or one mile. Try the [Visibility Mapping Tool](#) to determine distances from where you are right now.”

The [5-3-1 Visibility Method](#) allows you to determine your smoke exposure depending on what you see:

Can you see just under 5 miles? If so, the air quality is unhealthy for young children, adults over age 65, pregnant women, and people with heart and/or lung disease, asthma or other respiratory illness; they should minimize outdoor activity. These people should reschedule outdoor recreational activities for a day with better air quality. It is okay for adults in good health to be out and about but they should periodically check visibility especially when fires are nearby.

If you can see less than 3 miles, young children, adults over age 65, pregnant women, and people with heart and/or lung disease, asthma or other respiratory illness should stay indoors. All outdoor activities should be avoided, including running errands. Everyone else should try to stay indoors as much as possible. All outdoor recreational activities should be rescheduled for a day with better air quality.

If you can see less than 1 mile, everyone should avoid outdoor activity, including running errands. Unless an evacuation has been issued, you should stay inside your home or in a safe shelter.

Regardless of the visibility, if you are feeling as though you are having health problems from smoke, take precautions to avoid breathing in smoke and see your doctor or other health professional as needed. Smoke can cause:

- Coughing
- A scratchy throat
- Irritated sinuses
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Headaches
- Stinging eyes
- A runny nose

Individuals with heart or lung disease, such as congestive heart failure, angina, COPD, emphysema, or asthma, need to be aware that they may be at higher risk for experiencing health problems than those without these conditions. If you have symptoms of lung or heart disease that may be related to excess smoke exposure, including repeated coughing, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, wheezing, chest tightness or pain, heart palpitations, nausea, unusual fatigue or lightheadedness, contact your health care provider.

Listen and watch the news for health warnings about smoke. When you are advised to stay indoors, keep indoor air as clean as possible. Keep windows and doors closed. If it is extremely hot, you can run an air conditioner but not a swamp cooler. Get more stay cool tips at https://nmtracking.org/en/health_effects/heat-stress.

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