



Cochise Health & Social Services

Mary Gomez, Director

"Building A Healthier Future"

*** MEDIA RELEASE ***

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Cochise County Residents Warned of Possible Hazardous Air Quality

Air quality in portions of Cochise County could be considered hazardous because of the potential for heavy smoke from three fires burning near Cananea, Mexico. Air quality in part is defined by measuring the amount of particulate matter (a measurement of solid and liquid droplets in the air), or by using visibility guides. Any areas that experience visibility less than one mile would be considered to have hazardous concentrations of particulate matter. Excessive, persistent air pollution is a health threat, especially to children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing health problems.

While the fires remain approximately 15 miles south of the US-Mexico border, windy conditions could continue to transport smoke into various areas of Cochise County. People who experience heavy smoke throughout the duration of the fires should stay indoors with doors and windows closed. If the home has air conditioning, people can use it, but should keep the fresh air intake closed and the filter clean. No one should use an evaporative cooler when air quality is poor. For information on determining air quality by visibility, please see the Arizona Department of Health Services guidelines at http://www.azdhs.gov/phs/oeh/pdf/Health_Smoke_Wildfires.pdf.

Symptoms from short-term exposure to smoke include scratchy throat, cough, irritated sinuses, headaches, runny nose and stinging eyes, and more serious reactions among those in high-risk groups. Elevated levels of particulate matter also increase the potential for asthma attacks and other asthma-related symptoms in children.

Air quality will likely be a concern as long as the fires continue to burn. Anyone who feels they are at risk may want to consider limiting outdoor exposure. People with health issues (heart or lung disease, COPD, emphysema, or asthma) should contact their personal physician if they feel ill as a result of poor air quality. Those wishing to exercise outdoors are cautioned to use good judgment and perhaps choose alternate methods of exercise. Remember, if it looks smoky outside, it is generally not a good time for anyone to engage in outdoor activities.

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