



Florida Department of Environmental Protection

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STATEWIDE AIR QUALITY ADVISORY May 22 - 31, 2007

The Department of Environmental Protection (the Department) is issuing a statewide air quality advisory due to the effects of the high level of wildfire activity in the state. This advisory will remain in effect until statewide wildfire conditions show a measurable improvement. Florida is currently experiencing over 200 wildfires in over 50 counties. The most significant and immediate effect of wildfire on air quality is particle pollution that results from the burning. Our air quality index data are showing that all monitored areas have experienced particle pollution at levels above the standard for at least short periods of time.

Given that the level of wildfire activity is high, and may remain so over the next few days, citizens should take action to protect their health. Infants, children, pregnant women, older adults and people with chronic heart or lung diseases, such as asthma, are considered at greatest risk from breathing in smoke from wildfires, especially when they are physically active. When there are elevated smoke or particle pollution readings, the Department advises residents to limit their outside activities whenever possible. Symptoms associated with smoke and/or particle pollution may include irritation of eyes, nose and throat; headaches; coughing; fatigue; chest pain; palpitations; shortness of breath; wheezing; and aggravated asthma. Problems can begin a short time after breathing in smoke and without warning. If you have heart or lung disease and experience any of these symptoms, consult your doctor immediately.

The Department recommends that residents abide by the following guidelines during an incident of high smoke or particle pollution levels:

- Limit outdoor activities and remain in an air-conditioned environment.
- Leave the area until the smoke has cleared if you do not have air conditioning or if smoke is likely to get inside your house.
- Avoid activities that put extra demands on your lungs and heart. These include exercising or physical chores, both outdoors and indoors.
- Dust masks, bandanas, or other cloths (even if wet) will not protect you from smoke.
- Contact your medical provider if you are concerned about your health or your health gets worse.

For particle pollution data that is updated hourly, individuals can go to the Department's web site at: <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/air/flags/SelectReport.asp>. A reference map of the state is also available at: http://www.dep.state.fl.us/air/flags/PM_MapGen.asp, that shows hourly changes in particle pollution levels. For more comprehensive information on wildfire and air quality issues, visit the Department's new Emergency Management web site at: <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/mainpage/em/2007/wildfire/default.htm>.

Media inquiries, please contact the Department's Press Office at 850/245-2112. For air quality data questions, please contact Tammy Eagan at 850/488-0114.