

News Release

Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control and Health Department

DATE: September 11, 2015 9:00AM

FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE

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Tuolumne County Air Quality Health Alert

SONORA— Multiple fires in our surrounding area continue to affect air quality over most of Tuolumne County. The Butte Fire in Calaveras and Amador Counties, the Rough Fire in Fresno, as well as other, smaller fires have led to low visibility and air quality that is unhealthy for sensitive groups. Given our projected high temperatures and the high pressure system in the area today, we expect that the air quality will not improve much over the course of the day.

Currently it is recommended that children, elderly, and those with health problems such as asthma, COPD, and heart conditions, stay indoors. Vigorous physical activity outdoors should be limited or avoided unless there are good air quality conditions in the area at the time.

The following information is provided to allow you to assess the air quality in your immediate vicinity and to provide guidance for those people who live in neighborhoods affected by poor air quality. Because the Tuolumne County geography may entrap smoke in certain valleys and basins, the following visibility chart can be used to determine the air quality where you are. Visibility provides an excellent measure of air quality.

First identify on a map certain landmarks on the horizon. Then check to see at what distance the landmarks can no longer be seen. The distance of this landmark is the “visibility in miles.”

Air Quality Categories	Visibility in Miles
Good	10 miles and up
Moderate	6-9 miles
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	3-5 miles
Unhealthy	1½ - 2½ miles
Very Unhealthy	1-1¼ miles
Hazardous	¾ mile or less

The following guidelines can help to prevent breathing problems during times when air quality is poor due to wildfires:

- 1) Individuals with long term health conditions like asthma, lung or heart disease should make sure that they have a supply of medications on hand and are following their caregivers instructions.
- 2) Elderly and very young children should limit their outdoor activities when local air quality is “unhealthy for sensitive groups” (visibility less than 5 miles).
- 3) Signs that the smoke may be bothering you include coughing, scratchy throat, irritated sinuses, shortness of breath, stinging eyes or runny nose. Sometimes symptoms may even include chest pain or headaches. Consult your caregiver for worsening symptoms.
- 4) If you are advised to stay indoors, keep indoor air as clean as possible. Keep windows and doors closed unless it is extremely hot outside. Run an air conditioner if you have one, but keep the fresh-air intake closed and the filter clean to prevent outdoor smoke from getting inside. If you do not have an air conditioner and it is too warm to stay inside with the windows closed, seek shelter elsewhere.
- 5) Consider a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter to reduce breathing problems. Room air cleaners, which utilize a HEPA filter, may reduce the number of irritating fine particles in indoor air.
- 6) Do not add to indoor pollution. Do not smoke because smoking puts even more pollution into the air.

The Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District will continue to monitor air quality and will provide updates as the information becomes available.
