

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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Forest Fire Smoke Impacting Air Quality

Due to active forest fires in the region, some communities in Northwestern Ontario may experience smoke in the air this weekend. An air quality alert has been issued today for the Red Lake and Ear Falls area.

Forest fire smoke is made up of a mixture of gases and very small particles that can be harmful to your health. Individuals may experience symptoms such as increased coughing, throat irritation headaches or shortness of breath.

Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) reminds the public to reduce the length of time they are exposed to the forest fire smoke and the amount of air breathed in. Individuals most at risk of harm include children, elderly, pregnant women, people with heart or lung conditions, or persons with active and/or physical jobs.

Follow these tips to protect you and your family:

- If it looks smoky outside, stay inside as much as possible with your windows and doors closed. If you have room air cleaners with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters, turn them on.
- To help keep particle levels lower indoors avoid using items that 'burn', such as wood stoves and gas stoves or even candles.
- If you have an air conditioner set it to 'recirculate' and keep it running to help filter and cool the air. If you do not have air conditioning, if possible, try spending some time in an air-conditioned place, such as a mall or library, to cool off.
- Avoid smoking. Smoking puts even more harmful particles in your lungs and affects the quality of air for people around you.
- If you have asthma, use your medication as prescribed by your doctor. If you are supposed to measure your peak flows, make sure you do so. Call your doctor or nurse if your symptoms worsen.
- If you are in your car or truck, keep the windows closed and put the air system on 'recirculate'.

For more information, please contact your local health unit office to speak with a public health inspector.

- 30 -

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