

AIR QUALITY

Wildfire smoke can be a health risk for some people. In Montana it can be one of the most serious health complications in the environment, especially for children, the elderly and people who have existing heart or lung disease. If you can smell or see smoke, you should limit your exposure.

Health Effects Categories

Depending on how hazardous it may be, air quality can be categorized under one of the following labels:

- **Hazardous**—Serious risk of respiratory effects in the general population. Avoid any outdoor exertion. Those with respiratory conditions, the elderly and children should remain indoors.
- **Very Unhealthy**—Significant risk of respiratory effects in the general population. Those with respiratory conditions, the elderly and children should avoid outdoor activity; everyone else avoid prolonged exertion.
- **Unhealthy**—Increased aggravation of those with lung and heart disease. People with respiratory problems, the elderly and children should avoid exertion; everyone else should limit prolonged exertion.
- **Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups**—Increased likelihood of respiratory symptoms in sensitive individuals. People with respiratory problems, the elderly and children should limit prolonged exertion.
- **Moderate**—Possible aggravation of heart or lung disease among people with cardiopulmonary issues.

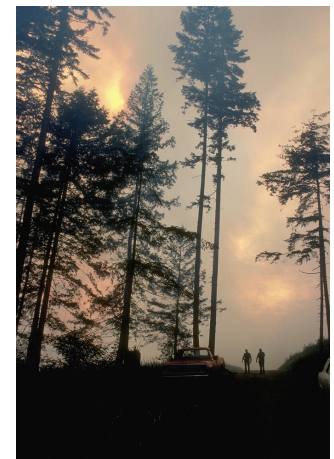
Air Monitoring Stations

Great Falls has an air monitoring station. To check on the current air quality in the Great Falls area and the rest of Montana, visit www.todaysair.mt.gov or <http://deq.mt.gov/fireupdates/index.asp>. Other air monitoring stations are located in Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Hamilton, Helena, Kalispell, Libby, Missoula and West Yellowstone.

Visibility Ranges

If unable to contact an air monitoring station, or if there is not one in your area, you can determine the health effects of the air by following the procedure below:

1. Face away from the sun.
2. Determine the limit of your visible range by looking for targets at known distances (miles).
3. Visible range is that point at which even high contrast objects totally disappear.
4. Use the values below to determine the local smoke category.



If You Can See:

Less than 1.3 miles
1.3 to 2.1 miles
2.2 to 5 miles
5.1 to 8.7 miles
8.8 to 13.3 miles

The Air Is:

Hazardous
Very Unhealthy
Unhealthy
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups
Moderate

For more information on air quality please contact a Sanitarian at City-County Health Department at 454-6950 or visit www.cchdmt.org.