

NEWS RELEASE

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SMOKE AFFECTS AIR QUALITY IN NIPISSING DISTRICT

NORTH BAY, ON – As smoke continues to affect the air quality in North Bay and surrounding areas, the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit (“Health Unit”) is reminding people to protect themselves should they encounter air pollutants such as forest fire smoke.

“Poor air quality can cause health problems and can be particularly harmful to children, seniors and pregnant woman,” says Robert A-Muhong, Manager of Environmental Health. “We recommend that people check the Air Quality Health Index through the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, to be aware of the degree of risk.”

The Ministry has a network of 38 outside air monitoring stations across the province that collect real-time air pollution data. This information is available to the public through Ontario’s Air Quality Health Index and gives an hourly snapshot of the air quality in the area. Though the air quality was listed as low risk in North Bay at the time of writing, it could change to moderate or high risk in the future. To view the Air Quality Health Index, visit www.airqualityontario.com.

To protect yourself and minimize the health effects of air pollutants such as forest fire smoke, the Health Unit recommends the following:

- If forest fire smoke is affecting your breathing or making you uncomfortable in others ways, move to a less smoky area. This may include going indoors or simply moving to an outdoor area with increased clean air flow.
- Homes can get really hot with the windows closed. If you do go indoors to get out of the smoke, be sure that the temperature indoors doesn't create additional problems for you. Use air conditioning or a fan if available and be sure to drink plenty of water to stay hydrated.
- If it is smoky outside, it is best not to go outdoors to do physical activity. Stay indoors with the windows closed.
- Use air conditioning in cars and keep windows closed. Remember, vehicles should never be run in an enclosed space like a garage.
- Avoid using smoke producing appliances such as wood stoves and even candles.
- Do not smoke tobacco inside - smoking puts added stress on your lungs and those around you.
- If you have asthma or other respiratory conditions, avoid smoke as much as you can and take your prescribed medicine. Speak with your health care provider to get the specific advice that is right for you.

For more information on forest fire smoke and your health, contact the Health Unit at 1-800-563-2808.

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