



**Panhandle Health District**

*Healthy People in Healthy Communities*

**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Panhandle Health District

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Contact:** Katherine Hoyer  
(208) 415-5108

## **Wildfire Smoke Advisory Issued in North Idaho**

**HAYDEN, ID** -- Panhandle Health District (PHD) and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) have issued a Wildfire Smoke Advisory for Boundary, Bonner, Kootenai, Shoshone, and Benewah Counties. Wildfire smoke from several fires currently burning in Idaho, Washington, Oregon and California are impacting air quality.

At this time, [air quality is categorized as “moderate” but will deteriorate to “unhealthy for sensitive groups” or “hazardous” as the weekend progresses.](#) Older adults, pregnant women, children and those with pre-existing respiratory issues or heart disease are often more affected by these conditions. Residents may notice the smell of wildfire smoke and reduced visibility.

Wildfire smoke can irritate your lungs, cause inflammation, affect your immune system, and make you more prone to lung infections, including SARS-CoV-2, the virus that cause COVID-19. Protect your family from the smoke by staying inside. Because you may be staying inside due to smoke this weekend, in order to protect you and your family from COVID-19, consider delaying your get-togethers until the air quality is good enough for you all to be comfortably outside where you can maintain social distance..

When our bodies really react to wildfire smoke, the symptoms can look a lot like COVID-19: coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath. Serious wheezing and shortness of breath are always worth a call to your health care provider — or 911 if you are really struggling to breathe. Your health care provider can help you determine whether you should be tested for COVID-19. The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality has a real-time air quality map you can access on their website to check air quality in your area.

Residents are advised to:

- Avoid heavy work or exercise outdoors.
- Set air conditioning units and car vent systems to re-circulate. For homes without a central heating and/or cooling system, use portable air purifiers to remove particles.
- Limit time outdoors, especially if you have respiratory conditions or heart disease.

- Drink plenty of water. Staying hydrated helps dilute phlegm in the respiratory tract, making it easier to cough out smoke particles.
- Seek medical treatment for uncontrolled coughing, wheezing, choking, or if you have difficulty breathing once you move back indoors.
- Stay up-to-date on air quality in your community. View near real-time air quality monitoring by visiting [www.deq.idaho.gov/air-quality/monitoring/daily-reports-and-forecasts](http://www.deq.idaho.gov/air-quality/monitoring/daily-reports-and-forecasts) .

PHD and DEQ will continue to monitor air quality conditions and will issue additional advisories as conditions warrant. For more information and resources regarding air quality or potential health impacts of wildfire smoke, visit [panhandlehealthdistrict.org](http://panhandlehealthdistrict.org).

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