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Air Quality Health Advisory

Durango, Colo. – The heavy, dense smoke in the Animas Valley will lift throughout the morning hours as winds shift to come from the southwest on Wednesday. Smoke from both the 416 and Burro fires will move in a northeasterly direction, throughout the day on Wednesday. This will bring periods of moderate to heavy smoke to rural parts of northeastern La Plata County, along with large sections of San Juan, Hinsdale, Mineral, Archuleta, Saguache and Rio Grande Counties. Close to the fire(s), the winds will turn calm once again on Wednesday night and smoke will again drain southward along the Animas River and produce moderate to heavy smoke Thursday morning in areas such as Hermosa, Durango and points southward through the New Mexico state line. Additionally, smoke from the Burro fire will settle in lower terrain along the Dolores River, affecting locations such as Dolores during the overnight and early morning hours.

Affected areas include portions of southwestern and south-central Colorado, including La Plata, San Juan, Hinsdale, Mineral, Archuleta, Rio Grande, Saguache, Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, northeastern Montezuma and eastern Dolores Counties. Locations include, but are not limited to, Durango, Rockwood, Hermosa, Silverton, Lake City, Pagosa Springs, South Fork, Creede, Del Norte, Saguache, Alamosa, Conejos, San Luis, Dolores, and the Southern Ute Reservation.

San Juan Basin Public Health (SJBPH) in conjunction with Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment Health (CDPHE) have placed additional air quality monitors in the area. Data from the monitors show the amount of all the microscopic particles in the air that can cause respiratory problems, especially for individuals with respiratory illnesses or heart disease, the elderly, and children.

- SJBPH Office Monitor - <https://tinyurl.com/ycjzlf5>
- North Durango Monitor - <https://tinyurl.com/ybzk7frh>
or via our website at <http://sjbpublichealth.org/416-fire-updates/>

San Juan Basin Public Health advises that you remain indoors if smoke is thick or becomes thick in your neighborhood. ***This is especially true for those with heart disease, respiratory illnesses, the very young, and the elderly.*** Consider limiting outdoor activity when moderate to heavy smoke is present. Consider relocating temporarily if smoke is present indoors and is making you ill. ***If visibility is less than five miles, smoke has reached levels that are unhealthy.***

Learn More: for additional air quality information and alerts visit:
https://www.colorado.gov/airquality/colo_advisory.aspx
<https://www.airnow.gov/>

Other tips to protect yourself:

- Close windows and doors and stay inside. However, do not close up your home tightly if it makes it dangerously warm inside.
- Only if they are filtered, run the air conditioning, your evaporative cooler, or the fan feature on your home heating system (with the heat turned off). Keep the outdoor air intake closed and be sure the filter is clean. Filtered air typically has less smoke than the air outdoors. Running these appliances if they are not filtered can make indoor smoke worse.
- Use HEPA room air filtration units if you have them.
- Avoid smoking and/or secondhand smoke, vacuuming, candles, and other sources of additional air pollution.
- Do not use paper dust masks; these do not filter out the particles and gases in smoke.

As temperatures cool in the evening inversion conditions worsen and smoke in low lying areas may become thicker, especially if the outdoor air is still. It tends to be worst near dawn.

- Close bedroom windows at night.
- To prepare for nighttime smoke, consider airing out your home during the early or middle of the afternoon when smoke tends to be more diluted. Use your best judgment. If smoke is thick during the day, follow the tips above.

Will a face mask protect me from wildfire smoke?

San Juan Basin Public Health recommends that the public seek advice from their Primary Care Physician (PCP) regarding if they should wear a mask in our smoky conditions. The PCP will best know the health of their patients and make appropriate recommendations based on that knowledge. Respirator masks labeled N95 or N100 provide some protection – they filter out fine particles but not hazardous gases (such as carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, and acrolein). This type of mask can be found at many hardware and home repair stores and pharmacies.

- Choose an N95 or N100 mask that has two straps that go around your head. Don't choose a one-strap paper dust mask or a surgical mask that hooks around your ears – these don't protect against the fine particles in smoke.
- Choose a size that fits over your nose and under your chin. It should seal tightly to your face. These masks don't come in sizes that fit young children.
- If your child is experiencing respiratory symptoms contact your pediatrician or go to the nearest emergency room.
- Don't use bandanas or towels (wet or dry) or tissue held over the mouth and nose. These may relieve dryness, but they won't protect your lungs from wildfire smoke.

Anyone with lung or heart disease who is chronically ill should check with their health care provider before using any mask. Using respirator masks can make it harder to breathe, which may make existing medical conditions worse. The extra effort it takes to breathe through a respirator mask can make it uncomfortable to use them for very long. These masks should be used mostly by people who have any health conditions listed above, are elderly, or who need to engage in strenuous exertion outdoors. Please contact your primary health care provider if symptoms persist or become more severe.

San Juan Basin Public Health is a local public health agency, governed by a seven member local Board of Health, serving all residents of Archuleta and La Plata counties. For 70 years, San Juan Basin Public Health has improved the health and environment of the Southwest Colorado.