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Broward County Advises Everyone to Take Precautions During Current Unhealthy Air Quality Conditions

The Broward County Environmental Protection Department's Air Quality Division and the Broward County Health Department have issued a health advisory for the Broward County areas affected by smoke from wildfires, effective today.

Infants, children, pregnant women, older adults and people with chronic heart or lung diseases, such as asthma, are considered at greatest risk from breathing in smoke from wildfires, especially when they are physically active. When there are elevated smoke or particulate matter readings, the Air Quality Division and the Health Department advise residents to limit their outside activities whenever possible.

Particulate matter pollution consists of very small solid particles or liquid droplets, including dust, dirt, smoke, soot, mold and pollen that come from a variety of different sources. Symptoms associated with smoke and/or particulate matter inhalation may include irritation of eyes, nose and throat; headaches; coughing; phlegm; chest pain; shortness of breath; wheezing; and aggravated asthma. Problems can begin a short time after breathing in smoke and without warning. If you have heart or lung disease and experience any of these symptoms, consult your doctor immediately.

The Air Quality Division and Health Department recommend that residents abide by the following guidelines during an incident of high smoke or particulate matter levels:

- Limit outdoor activities and remain in an air-conditioned environment
- Leave the area until the smoke has cleared if you do not have air conditioning or smoke is likely to get inside your house.
- Avoid activities that put extra demands on your lungs and heart. These include exercising or physical chores, both outdoors and indoors.
- Take all medication according to the doctor's instructions.
- Dust masks, bandanas, or other cloths (even if wet) will not protect you from smoke.
- Contact your medical provider if you are concerned about your health or your health gets worse.

The most current Air Quality Index for Broward County can be obtained by calling the Air Quality Index information line at 954-519-1280. Residents can also receive immediate notification by email or pager when the Air Quality Index fall into the “moderate” or “unhealthy for sensitive groups” categories by registering for the EnviroFlash alert systems. Visit www.broward.org/air and click on the “Air Quality” button.

For more information on Broward County’s air quality forecasting, contact the Air Quality Division at 954-519-1220 or visit www.broward.org/air. For information on programs and services at the Broward County Health Department, visit www.browardchd.org.

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