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Area Wide Air Pollution Action Day Called for Sunday, July 19th

Widespread Wildfire Smoke Anticipated at or Above the Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has issued an Areawide Air Pollution Action Day for Sunday, July 19th. This is in addition to the ongoing Chicago Air Pollution Action Day in effect today July 18th. This alert includes all of Illinois' Air Quality Index (AQI) forecast sectors, except Metro-East St. Louis. An Areawide Air Pollution Action Day is declared when weather conditions are such that widespread ozone and or particulate levels are forecast to be at OR ABOVE the Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (USG) category in nearly all Illinois AQI forecast sectors.

Starting Saturday afternoon, smoke/fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) at levels that may negatively impact air quality is expected to return to Illinois, first in more northern areas in the afternoon/evening and then pressing further south in the overnight. Areas both inside and outside of the Action Day coverage area may experience smoke to a varying degree and duration both later today and Sunday. Smoke may also linger in much of Illinois on Monday, and all forecasts will periodically be reassessed throughout the weekend. With this in mind, those with air quality concerns or anyone in Illinois with outdoor plans is encouraged to check current [NowCast](#) readings on [AirNow.gov](#). Before going outside, checking the [NowCast AQI](#) will help identify periods of both poor and cleaner air quality, regardless of the level of the daily forecasted AQI that drives the Action Day messaging.

As another tip, the AirNow fire and smoke map, <https://fire.airnow.gov/>, will also show readings from "Purple" PM_{2.5} air sensors between regulatory monitoring areas. This map will also exclude readings from pollutants other than those that pick up on smoke that can misleadingly show better air quality.

AQI Category Guidance can be found at: <https://www.airnow.gov/publications/activity-guides/air-quality-activity-guide-for-particle-pollution/>

Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (USG): Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is less likely to be affected. *Sensitive groups:* Make outdoor activities shorter and less intense. It's OK to be active outdoors but take more breaks. Watch for symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath. *People with asthma:* Follow your asthma action plan and

keep quick relief medicine handy. *People with heart disease:* Symptoms such as palpitations, shortness of breath, or unusual fatigue may indicate a serious problem. If you have any of these, contact your health care provider.

Unhealthy: *Sensitive groups:* Avoid long or intense outdoor activities. Consider rescheduling or moving activities indoors. *Everyone else:* Reduce long or intense activities. Take more breaks during outdoor activities.

Very Unhealthy: *Sensitive groups:* Avoid all physical activity outdoors. Reschedule to a time when air quality is better or move activities indoors. *Everyone else:* Avoid long or intense activities. Consider rescheduling or moving activities indoors.

Note: If you do not have an air conditioner, staying inside with the windows closed may be dangerous in extremely hot weather. If you are hot, go somewhere with air conditioning or check with your local government to find out if cooling centers are available in your community.

Additionally, [NowCast AQI](#) readings may show categories higher than the daily forecast to help identify periods of higher 1-hour PM_{2.5}/smoke. For a description of the differences between daily AQI forecasts and NowCast AQI, visit <https://www.airnow.gov/aqi/aqi-basics/using-air-quality-index/>.

Illinois officials want to ensure residents take precautions to protect their health and limit exposure when air quality conditions decline. In addition to the [AirNow.gov](#) website, residents can subscribe to FREE air quality forecasts and alerts through the [EnviroFlash](#) program and download the Free **AIRNow App** for iPhone and Android phones: [iPhone App](#) | [Android App](#).

Wildfire smoke can travel long distances, and Illinois air quality can be impacted by fires located hundreds of miles away. Factsheets, including a [Wildfire guide](#) and [How to protect your pets from wildfire smoke](#) are available to increase understanding of the effects of these wildfires. [Activity guides](#) are also available that outline suggested actions to take to mitigate the effects of any unhealthy air quality days, including one for educators and parents detailing [how to safely let students and children](#) interact with the environment.

Residents with respiratory and pulmonary disorders, children, older adults, and anyone who is active outdoors are most at risk due to elevated air pollution. Sensitive individuals should follow their doctor's advice. Symptoms worth your attention include wheezing, coughing, elevated heart rate, tiredness, chest pain, and shortness of breath. If symptoms worsen, you should call your physician or 911.

All residents should keep cool and limit physical activity outdoors when air quality is unhealthy (Red) according to the Air Quality Index. Illinois residents are also encouraged to take the following actions to protect themselves when air quality is unhealthy:

- Stay indoors and monitor your breathing, especially if you have heart or lung disease, and keep windows and doors closed.
- If your air conditioner has a fresh air intake, set your system to recirculate or close the intake.

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- Use high efficiency filters in air conditioning systems and portable air cleaners.
- Avoid activities that create more particulate matter indoors, like smoking or burning candles.
- If you cannot avoid working or other outdoor activities, then choose shorter or less intense activities, consider rescheduling if possible, and take more frequent breaks.
- Consider wearing a high-quality N-95 or N-100 mask to filter damaging particles while outdoors.

Additional information is also available on the [Illinois EPA website](#) and the [IDPH website](#).

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