



KOOTENAI COUNTY

OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

September 5, 2017

For further information:
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Kootenai County Office of Emergency Management

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Very Unhealthy Air Quality

We are all concerned about the *very unhealthy* air quality we have in our region. This hazardous air quality can negatively impact the public, especially those working outside. People with heart or lung disease, older adults and children should avoid all physical activity outdoors. Everyone else should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion.

The National Weather Service in Spokane forecasts the smoke to linger on Wednesday and Thursday, and conditions could slowly improve later Thursday into Friday. Wearing some kind of respirator such as the N95, which can be found in hardware and other local stores, can provide "some protection", if worn properly. Facial hair diminishes the N95's effectiveness because a proper seal cannot be achieved. It will not protect against everything, but it is the more effective and widely available respirator. Dust masks are insufficient for wildfire smoke. Go to the Center for Disease Control website at <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2003-144/> for a Respirator Fact Sheet for more information on respirators.

Some ways to reduce smoke exposure particularly indoors include avoiding the use of anything that burns, such as candles, fireplaces, or gas stoves. Do not vacuum, as it stirs up particles already inside your home. If you wear contact lenses, switch to eyeglasses in a smoky environment.

Common symptoms from smoke inhalation include; shortness of breath, chest pain or tightness, headaches, coughing, irritated sinuses, stinging eyes, sore throat and fatigue. Listen and watch for news or health warnings regarding wildfire smoke. Pay attention to local air quality reports and public health messages that provide safety measures.

For the current air quality status go to: <https://airnow.gov> and insert your zip code.