



MESA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Working Together for a Healthy Community

NEWS RELEASE

Date: June 29, 2012

Contact: Kristy Emerson
248-6964 (Office), 260-7042 (Cell)
kristy.ermerson@mesacounty.us

Air Quality Advisory Issued Due to Smoke From Wildfire

Residents urged to take precautions due to poor air quality conditions

Mesa County, CO--- **The Mesa County Health Department is issuing a health advisory related to air quality due to the Pine Ridge Wildfire in the DeBeque area.**

Due to continuing wind and weather changes impacting the Pine Ridge wildfire, the air quality in Mesa County is likely to change frequently throughout any day. Poor air quality could cause breathing difficulties for any person, but especially for people susceptible to respiratory conditions.

In general, if you can see or smell smoke, it is recommended that you avoid outdoor physical activities. If visibility is decreased in your neighborhood to less than five miles, smoke has reached levels that are unhealthy.

Children, Elderly, and People with Respiratory Conditions

If you can see or smell smoke, children, elderly, pregnant women, and people with pre-existing respiratory conditions should stay inside with the windows and doors closed. If it is hot outside, run an air conditioner if you have one, but keep the fresh-air intake closed and the filter clean to prevent outdoor smoke from getting inside. If you do not have an air conditioner and it is too warm to stay inside with the windows closed, seek shelter elsewhere.

Children are more likely to be affected by health threats from smoke because their airways are still developing and because they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults. Children also are more likely to be active outdoors.

Older adults are more likely to be affected by smoke, as they have higher levels of heart or lung diseases than younger people. Follow your doctor's advice about medicines and about your respiratory management plan if you have asthma or another lung disease. Call your doctor if your symptoms worsen.

Healthy Individuals

When smoke levels are high, even healthy people may experience coughing, a scratchy throat, irritated sinuses, shortness of breath, chest pain, headaches, stinging eyes, and a runny nose. If you can see or smell smoke, you should limit outdoor physical activities and stay indoors if at all possible.

Wildfire smoke contains pollutants that can be harmful to health. Particles from smoke tend to be very small and can therefore be inhaled into the deepest recesses of the lung and may represent a greater health concern than larger particles. Even in healthy people, this can cause temporary reductions in lung function and pulmonary inflammation. Particulate matter can also affect the body's immune system.

A pre-recorded information line regarding air quality concerns and recommendations has been established at 970-248-6918. For more information please call Western Colorado 211 at 244-8400 from a cell phone or visit www.inciweb.org.