

County of Santa Clara

Public Health Department

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HEALTH ADVISORY: AIR QUALITY

DATE: July 26, 2016
TO: Healthcare Providers, Hospitals, and Clinics
FROM: Sara H. Cody, MD, Health Officer

Firefighters are still working to tame the Soberanes fire in Monterey County. Smoke from this fire may be heavy in many areas of Santa Clara County. At this time, the blaze is only 10 percent contained and the National Weather Service anticipates that air quality will be affected until Thursday, July 28. The Public Health Department is monitoring the situation through its syndromic surveillance system for any increases in reports of respiratory symptoms. Currently there are no significant increases in Emergency Department visits related to smoke.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (see <http://www.baaqmd.gov/about-air-quality/current-air-quality>) has issued a Spare the Air Alert, which has been in effect for the Bay Area since Monday. Currently the air quality is unhealthy for people in sensitive groups. Sensitive groups include children, older adults, people with respiratory problems or lung disease such as asthma, and people who are active outdoors.

The Public Health Department is advising people to stay indoors and to restrict activity outdoors while the air quality is poor. When outdoors, people – particularly people who are in a sensitive group – may experience irritation of the lungs or eyes, coughing, a scratchy throat, and irritated sinuses.

Other steps people can take to reduce respiratory problems include setting air conditioning units and car vent systems to re-circulate, and if they smell fumes or smoke, limit outdoor activities to avoid unnecessary exposure.

Recommendations for Healthcare Professionals:

1. Advise all patients to reduce prolonged or heavy outdoor exertion.
2. Patients who need to be outdoors should limit intense activities and take more breaks. If possible, outdoor activities should be scheduled in the morning when air quality is better.
3. Patients – especially children, elderly, and those with asthma or other lung conditions – who are outdoors, should watch for symptoms of coughing or shortness of breath and be advised to contact you if symptoms persist.
4. Advise patients with asthma to follow their asthma action plan and keep quick relief medicine handy. If asthma symptoms worsen, they should contact you.

For further information and updates on local air quality, please go to www.baaqmd.gov or www.epa.gov.

Health ALERT: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health ADVISORY: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health UPDATE: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.