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AIR QUALITY HEALTH ADVISORY

Health officials are advising people to take precautions should smoke from forest fires spread across Saskatchewan resulting in poor air quality.

“People with heart or lung conditions, older adults and seniors are particularly at risk,” said SHA Medical Health Officer Dr. Mandiangu Nsungu of North Battleford. “Even healthy individuals can be affected. Monitor your symptoms and seek medical attention if you get worse, particularly if you have a pre-existing respiratory condition.”

You can protect yourself during a severe smoke event by:

- Reducing or avoiding strenuous outdoor activities especially if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation. Children, the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions such as heart and respiratory disease should be especially cautious.
- Not relying on dust masks, bandanas, and cloths (even if the cloths are wet), since they are designed to trap large particles and not designed to protect lungs from smoke.
- Reducing or eliminating exposure to outside air when inside: close windows and close ventilation systems that bring outdoor air indoors.
- Staying inside and turning on your air conditioner. Make sure to check to make sure it does not bring outdoor air indoors. You could also go to an air-conditioned public space such as a mall, library or church to reduce exposure to outdoor air.
- Using a HEPA air cleaner that will reduce levels of small particles in indoor air, and staying in the room where the air cleaner is located.
- Avoiding tobacco smoke exposure as smoking puts added stress on your lungs and those around you.

Residents can check current air quality conditions at www.environment.gov.sk.ca/airqualityindex for areas of Saskatchewan and at www.sesaa.ca for Southern Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan’s air quality index can be accessed at https://weather.gc.ca/airquality/pages/provincial_summary/sk_e.html.

For air zones see www.wyamz.ca and www.gpaz.org.

Wildfire smoke forecasts for Western Canada are available at <http://www.bcairquality.ca/bluesky/west/index.html>. The Air Quality Health Index of Saskatchewan’s major centers can be accessed at www.airhealth.ca.

For health concerns related to air quality, visit HealthLine Online at www.healthlineonline.ca. For advice on symptoms and precautions call HealthLine at **811**.

Linda Lewis, Communications Officer
North Battleford
306-446-6625
Linda.lewis@saskhealthauthority.ca