



September 6, 2017

Dear Superintendents,

As a result of the smoke from wildfires in the Pacific Northwest, public air quality advisories have been issued by Metro Vancouver and the BC Ministry of Environment. The region has also recently experienced days with relatively high temperatures. The air quality conditions are expected to last for several days.

Students are sensitive to poor air quality and heat, particularly students with chronic illnesses such as asthma or heart conditions. Schools may be wondering about what they should do in light of the advisories. We ask you to consider the following:

How can we tell if smoke is affecting our school?

- Check several times a day your local Air Quality Health Index (AQHI): [BC Air Quality](#) or [Metro Vancouver AirMap](#) by clicking on your AQHI region.
- Check air quality advisory status at [Metro Vancouver status](#) and air quality data at [Metro Vancouver AirMap](#) by clicking on fine particulate (PM_{2.5}).

What should we do if we are affected?

- Follow the health messaging provided in each AQHI category (**provided on page 2**).
- Make sure children are able to keep cool and have plenty of water to drink.
- Reduce the level of physical activity especially during the hottest time of the day.
- Monitor the children for physical distress.
- Staying indoors can decrease exposure to air pollution. But make sure windows are not closed if you do not have air conditioning, so that it does not heat up inside the building.
- Postpone planned major outdoor activities or events. Instead have outings to neighborhood libraries, community centres or other public spaces where there is central air conditioning.
- Ensure children with chronic conditions such as asthma who are prescribed "rescue" medications have the medications readily available.

The Fraser Health Medical Health Officers are available for medical consultations at 604-587-3828 or 1-877-342-6467 (M-F, 0830-1630 hrs) or after hours at 604-527-4806.

Medical Health Officer
Fraser Health

400 – 13450 102nd Avenue
Surrey, BC V3T 0H1
Canada

Tel: (604) 930-5404
Fax: (604) 930-5414
www.fraserhealth.ca

What can our school do to improve indoor air quality?

- If there is central air conditioning at your facility, there are readily available commercial air filters that will take out the smoke and provide you a cooling and clean air place for the children.
- A correctly sized commercially available HEPA air filter will help improve the air inside.
- Portable air conditioners generally have inadequate filters. But using both a HEPA air filter and a portable air conditioner can provide a cooling and clean air space.

Air Quality Health Index Categories and Health Messages

The AQHI uses a scale to show the health risk associated with the air pollution we breathe.

The following table provides the health messages for ‘at risk’ individuals and the general public for each of the AQHI Health Risk Categories.

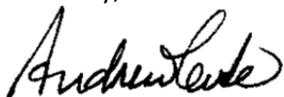
Health Risk	AQHI Index	Health Messages	
		At Risk Population ¹	General Population
Low	1 - 3	Enjoy your usual outdoor activities.	Ideal air quality for outdoor activities.
Moderate (MOD)	4 - 6	Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you are experiencing symptoms.	No need to modify your usual outdoor activities unless you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.
High	7 - 10	Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also take it easy.	Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.
Very High	Above 10	Avoid strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also avoid outdoor physical exertion.	Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors, especially if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.

¹ People with heart or breathing problems are at greater risk. Follow your doctor's usual advice about exercising and managing your condition.

Source: Environment Canada

* If the AQHI index has increased to 7 (high health risk), it is usually because of high concentrations of smoke particles (PM2.5) in this community.

Sincerely,



Dr. Andrew Larder FRCPC
Medical Health Officer