

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release - Attention Editor

AIR QUALITY ADVISORY IN EFFECT FOR SMITHERS

(February 12, 2018 - Smithers) The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy in collaboration with Northern Health and the Town of Smithers has issued an Air Quality Advisory for Smithers because of high concentrations of fine particulate matter. This advisory is in effect until further notice.

Persons with chronic underlying medical conditions should postpone strenuous exercise until the advisory is lifted. Staying indoors and in air conditioned spaces helps to reduce fine particulate exposure. Exposure is particularly a concern for infants, the elderly and those who have diabetes, and lung or heart disease.

For the duration of this advisory the use of woodstoves is prohibited within the Town of Smithers, unless the woodstove is the only source of heat in a dwelling.

Real-time air quality observations and information regarding the health effects of air pollution can be found at <http://www.bcairquality.ca>.

Fine particulate matter, PM_{2.5}, refers to airborne solid or liquid droplets with diameters of 2.5 micrometres (µm) or less. PM_{2.5} levels tend to be highest around busy roads, industrial operations and neighbourhoods with residential wood burning. PM_{2.5} can easily penetrate indoors because of their small size. Sources of PM_{2.5} contributing to this air quality episode include emissions from wood smoke (woodstoves) as well as emissions from industry and transportation sources such as automobiles, trucks and rail traffic.

Tips to reduce your personal health risk:

- Avoid roads with heavy vehicle traffic and areas with wood smoke.
- Continue to manage medical conditions such as asthma, chronic respiratory disease and heart failure. If symptoms continue to be bothersome, seek medical attention.
- Use common sense regarding outdoor physical activity; if your breathing becomes difficult or uncomfortable, stop or reduce the activity.
- Maintaining good overall health is a good way to reduce health risks resulting from short-term exposure to air pollution.

For persons with chronic underlying medical conditions:

- Residents with asthma or other chronic illness should activate their asthma or personal care plan.
- Stay indoors, keep windows and doors closed and reduce indoor sources of pollution such as smoking, vacuuming and use of wood stoves.

- Run an air cleaner. Some room air cleaners, such as HEPA filters, can help reduce indoor particulate levels provided they are the right size for your home and filters are changed regularly.
- Take shelter in air-conditioned buildings which have large indoor volumes and limited entry of outdoor air.

Mandatory Emission Reduction Actions:

- Smithers bylaw 1520 restricts the use of wood burning appliances during air quality advisories:

6a: “No person shall use a wood-burning appliance at any time when an air quality advisory is in effect, except to heat premises that are equipped with no heating appliance or facilities other than the wood burning appliance.”

Contact the Smithers municipal office at 250.847.1600 for more information on woodstove restrictions.

Voluntary Emission Reduction Actions:

- Avoid the use of woodstoves and fireplaces unless used as the sole source of residential heat.
- Where woodstoves or fireplaces are the sole source of residential heat, burn dry wood and ensure an adequate supply of combustion air.
- Reduce the use and idling of vehicles.

Additional Information:

- Increased windspeeds today should reduce PM_{2.5} levels, however depending on emissions, this advisory may persist until Tuesday when the weather changes.
- Air quality will improve if emissions are reduced.
- The provincial air quality objective for PM_{2.5}, is 25 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m³), averaged over 24 hours. 24-hour average PM_{2.5} concentrations are summarized below for communities along Hwy 16 as of February 12, 2018 at 07:00 local time:

Community	Prince George	Vanderhoof	Houston	Smithers	Terrace
Concentration (µg/m ³)	16.8	29.9	23	33.2	4.7

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