

## MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release - Attention Editor

# AIR QUALITY ADVISORY AND OPEN BURNING RESTRICTIONS IN EFFECT FOR ELKFORD

(November 21, 2024 9:00 AM) The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy in collaboration with the Interior Health Authority has issued an Air Quality Advisory for Elkford due to high concentrations of fine particulate matter that are expected to persist until weather conditions change.

Exposure is particularly a concern for individuals with chronic conditions such as asthma, COPD, heart disease, and diabetes; respiratory infections such as COVID-19, pregnant women, infants, and older adults. Persons with chronic underlying medical conditions or acute infections should postpone or reduce strenuous exercise until the advisory is lifted. Where appropriate, maintain physical distancing. Anyone experiencing symptoms such as continuing eye or throat irritation, chest discomfort, shortness of breath, cough or wheezing, should follow the advice of their health care provider. Staying indoors helps to reduce exposure.

Open burning restrictions are now in effect for Elkford and surrounding area until November 23, 2024 9:00 AM local time. No new fires may be initiated and no additional material may be added to existing fires. For more information on burning restrictions, see the section below entitled *Mandatory Emission Reduction Actions*.

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

Fine particulate matter, PM<sub>2.5</sub>, refers to airborne solid or liquid droplets with diameters of 2.5 micrometres (µm) or less. PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels tend to be highest around busy roads, industrial operations and neighbourhoods with residential wood burning. PM<sub>2.5</sub> can easily penetrate indoors because of their small size. Common sources of PM<sub>2.5</sub> that contribute to episodes of poor air quality include wood smoke (from wood stoves and/or open burning) 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.
- 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.
- 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.

- In public spaces, buildings with large indoor volumes of filtered outside air may provide temporary relief. When indoors, ensure physical distancing guidelines for COVID-19 are observed. Be aware that space within indoor public buildings may be limited due to physical distancing guidelines for COVID-19.

### **Additional tips for persons with chronic underlying medical conditions**

- People with heart or respiratory conditions (including COVID-19) should watch for any change in symptoms that may be due to poor air quality exposure. If any symptoms are noted, affected individuals should take steps to reduce their exposure to poor air quality. If symptoms continue to be bothersome, seek medical attention.
- People with asthma or other chronic illness should activate their asthma or personal care plan.
- People with chronic underlying medical conditions or acute infections should postpone or reduce strenuous exercise until the advisory is lifted.
- Stay indoors, keep windows and doors closed and reduce indoor sources of pollution such as smoking, vacuuming and use of wood stoves. When indoors, ensure physical distancing guidelines for COVID-19 are observed.

### **Mandatory Emission Reduction Actions**

- As pollution is occurring or is likely to occur from open burning, pursuant to Sections 30(1) and 30(2) of the Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation, the Director has prohibited open burning in the Elkford area within 30 km of the Rocky Mountain Elementary School until November 23, 2024 9:00 AM local time. No vegetative debris may be ignited or added to ignited piles. Contravention of these provisions may be subject to a fine under the Regulation.

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For Director, Environmental Management Act  
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- Industry is required to follow permit requirements that are triggered during air quality advisories and are asked to reduce emissions wherever possible.

### **Voluntary Emission Reduction Actions**

- Avoid the use of wood stoves and fireplaces unless 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

- Common sources of fine particulates that contribute to episodes of poor air quality include wood smoke (from wood stoves and/or open burning) as well as emissions from industry and transportation sources such as automobiles, trucks and rail traffic.
- This episode is expected to continue until there is a change in the current weather system.
- Real-time air quality information from Elkford and other B.C. communities can be found at: <https://www.gov.bc.ca/airquality>.
- The provincial air quality objective for PM<sub>2.5</sub> is 25 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m<sup>3</sup>), averaged over 24 hours. 24-hour average PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations are summarized below for Elkford and nearest monitored communities at 9:00 AM local time today:

Community	Castlegar	Cranbrook	Elkford	Golden	Sparwood
24-hr average (ug/m3)	6.6	11.5	53.1	11.3	12.3

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