

DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS

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AIR QUALITY HEALTH ADVISORY – SMOKE
Smoke Advisory for Plumas County
The week of August 13 - 20, 2012

Smoke from the Chips Fire in western Plumas County is impacting heavily the northern portions of Plumas County, specifically, the Almanor Basin and at times the Indian Valley. At times, the smoke may be dense, especially during the early morning hours when cool temperatures can cause the smoke to settle into the various river canyons and valleys. In the late morning and afternoon hours, smoke is likely to be spread over much of the region by the prevailing winds. There is even a chance, as the winds bring the smoke back around, that smoke from the Reading fire in the Lassen Volcanic National Park could add to the smoke impacts in northern Plumas County. The Chips fire is burning in dense vegetation and putting up some very impressive quantities of smoke. That means there is a high potential for unhealthy levels of particulate matter over the course of the next few days, possibly even the next week depending on how the fire behaves.

Therefore, the Air District is issuing an advisory for elevated smoke levels to occur at various times today and throughout the upcoming week. Additionally, the Plumas County Health Officer has issued a wildfire smoke advisory.

That advisory can be viewed at: <http://www.plumascounty.us/index.aspx?nid=2208>

If you smell smoke, or see smoke around you, consider restricting your outside activities. Until the potential for poor air quality subsides, individuals should consider taking the following actions:

- Healthy people should delay strenuous exercise, particularly when they can smell smoke.
- Children and elderly people should consider avoiding outdoor activities, particularly prolonged outdoor exertion.
- People with illnesses, particularly asthma and respiratory problems, should remain indoors. Asthmatics should follow their asthma management plan.
- Contact your doctor if you have symptoms such as chest pain, chest tightness, shortness of breath, or severe fatigue. This is important for not only people with chronic lung or heart disease, but also for individuals who have not been previously diagnosed with such illnesses. Smoke can “unmask” or produce symptoms of such diseases.
- Keep airways moist by drinking lots of water. Breathing through a warm, wet washcloth can also help relieve dryness.

In general, when smoke concentrations are elevated it is advisable to stay indoors with windows and doors closed and set air-conditioners on “re-circulate.” Do not run swamp coolers or whole house fans.

Disposable particulate respirators found at hardware stores can be effective at reducing exposure to smoke particles as long as they seal closely to the wearer’s face. Look for respirators that have two straps and have the words “NIOSH” and either “P100” or “N95” printed on the filter material. Warning: particulate respirators will not provide complete protection in very smoky conditions and may even

interfere with proper breathing. It should also be noted that there is some controversy surrounding the use of particulate respirators because of the many variables that may hinder their proper use.

When feasible, pets should be brought indoors when outdoor air quality is poor.

Studies have linked fine particulate matter (smoke) with significant health problems, including work and school absences, respiratory related hospital admissions, aggravated asthma, acute respiratory symptoms (including severe chest pain, gasping, and aggravated coughing), chronic bronchitis, decreased lung function, and premature death.

For more information regarding the Chips fire go to: <http://yubanet.com/CA Fires/Chips.php>

A good internet site for current local fire information is www.yubanet.com. A satellite view depicting the smoke plume may be available via www.wrh.noaa.gov/sto by clicking “Satellite Imagery” on the left and choosing the “Visible, Western US, 1km Resolution” option. Another useful site is <http://gacc.nifc.gov/oncc/>

And if you are really into seeing the smoke data that is being collected by the California Air Resources Board, then follow these directions very carefully:

- 1) Link to: <http://airnowtech.org/index.cfm?page=login>
- 2) Username: gvlasek Password: vlasek211
- 3) Click ‘Data’. On the next screen choose ‘Chips Fire’ on the pull-down menu for ‘Sites’, select a date range, and choose ‘Hourly PM 2.5 ‘ on the query line, then click the ‘data’ or ‘Graph’ button to view. If you miss a step the data will not appear.

Please DO NOT call 911 for information.