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## Department of Ecology News Release - September 20, 2012

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# Smoke spreads across Eastern Washington with little relief in sight

YAKIMA – Smoke is filling up the low-lying areas of Eastern Washington with weather patterns keeping a lid on most of the region with no relief in sight, according to the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology).

“Unfortunately, areas around Wenatchee remain in the worst shape,” said Sean Hopkins, Ecology air quality specialist in Yakima. “At the same time, other areas are experiencing unhealthy air anywhere smoke lingers from the hundreds of wildfires that are burning.”

Specifically, Ecology and Forest Service air-quality monitors in Chelan County are reading in the hazardous and unhealthy ranges. Poorer conditions are trending in the Quincy area and conditions could worsen around Spokane, Pullman and Clarkston.

Monitor measurements in Ellensburg are in the unhealthy range, but is trending better than earlier hazardous readings. Cle Elum readings by the Forest Service are moderate, showing some improvement.

All residents in the Wenatchee area should stay indoors and curtail their physical activities both indoors and out. Doors and windows should remain closed. In the remainder of the Yakima and Columbia basins common sense precautions should be taken by everyone, but sensitive groups -- such as children, the elderly and heart patients -- are particularly vulnerable.

The biggest health threat comes from the fine particles in smoke. These can cause burning eyes, runny nose, bronchitis and other illnesses. Smoky air also can aggravate pre-existing heart and lung diseases, and even lead to death.

Follow air quality online at the Washington Department of Ecology [wildfire/smoke Web page](#): Go to Ecology’s home page at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/> and click on “Wildfire smoke updates” on the right side under “Spotlight.”

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