

Health Unit Media Release

For Immediate Release: May 31, 2010



SMOG ADVISORY DUE TO WOOD SMOKE IN EFFECT

The Medical Officer of Health is issuing a Smog Advisory on Monday May 31, 2010 based on information from the Ontario Ministry of the Environment. Portions of the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark areas are experiencing poor air quality today due to smoke that is being attributed to several forest fires in Quebec.

To measure smog, data from the province's air monitoring network are used to calculate the air quality index (AQI), which informs Ontario residents about local air quality conditions.

AQI levels are as follows:

- **Good or very good air quality - AQI below 32**
- **Moderate air quality – AQI between 32 and 49**
- **Poor air quality - AQI between 50 to 99 (Smog Advisory issued)**
- **Very poor air quality – AQI over 100**

“Smoke from the fires in Western Quebec is being blown into our air space creating smog. Smog can irritate the lungs, eyes, nose and throat, and can cause breathing difficulties” warns Dr. Paula Stewart, Medical Officer of Health for the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit. “People with lung diseases like asthma or COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) or those with heart disease are affected more than others. Stay indoors as much as possible and avoid strenuous activities outdoors until the smog advisory is lifted, hopefully by tomorrow,” Stewart adds, “if severe breathing difficulties occur then consult your primary health care provider.”

There are some actions you can take to reduce the health effects of smoke in the air:

- Use common sense regarding outdoor physical activity – if your breathing becomes difficult or uncomfortable, stop or reduce the activity. Stay cool and drink plenty of fluids.
- Smoke levels may be lower indoors, however levels of smoke particles will still be increased. If you stay indoors, be aware of your symptoms. Keep in mind that staying indoors may help provide some relief from the smoke, however many air conditioning systems do not filter the air or improve indoor air quality.
- Keep indoor air cleaner by avoiding smoking or burning other materials.
- Residents with asthma or other chronic illness should activate their asthma or personal care plan.
- Pay attention to local air quality reports, air quality may be poor even though smoke may not be visible. Information is available at www.airhealth.ca and www.airqualityontario.com

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit is monitoring the weather forecasts for heat and smog. Citizens will be notified throughout the local media outlets when dangerous levels of smog are forecasted to become imminent; the Health Unit will be offering protective and proactive advice on how to deal with these summer conditions.

For more information, contact the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit at 1-800-660-5853 or 613-345-5685 or visit our website at www.healthunit.org.