



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CITY PROVIDES UPDATE ON MARSH FIRE STATUS AND PRECAUTIONS

NEW ORLEANS, LA-- At this time, a marsh fire is burning in New Orleans East, located approximately 1500 – 2000 yards north of Chef Menteur Highway and west of Bayou Sauvage. The fire is feeding off of brush, including chinaberry and willow trees, along with compacted layers of peat moss under the marsh brush.

It is believed that the fire started after a lightning storm on the evening of Wednesday, August 24. Since Thursday, August 25, 2011, the New Orleans Fire Department (NOFD) has been monitoring the fire. The Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF) and the City's Mosquito & Termite Control Board pilots have conducted aerial reconnaissance.

According to LDAF and NOFD, the fire is 100% contained because the area is surrounded by water on all four sides. It is estimated that approximately 1300 acres have burned to date, and that there are 1,000 acres remaining in this water-locked area. LDAF will conduct a more detailed GIS reconnaissance flight in the morning to determine the more exact area impacted and estimates for when the fire may burn itself out.

The fire is burning in an area that is completely inaccessible to NOFD equipment; however, the City is coordinating with federal, state, and regional agencies to determine what assets can be mobilized to fight this fire effectively.

The fire is in an extremely isolated area and poses no threat to citizens or property. Any inconvenience or discomfort suffered from smoke is determined solely by which direction the wind blows.

According to the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the smoke is causing increased levels of particulate matter in the atmosphere. The Air Quality Index indicates that particulate matter is at the orange level today, which is unhealthy for sensitive groups. As such, DEQ has issued an air quality action day for particulate matter for Orleans, Jefferson,

Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. John the Baptist, and St. Tammany. DEQ will monitor air quality every hour on the hour and publishes data on their website-- www.deq.louisiana.gov . A DEQ mobile testing unit has been dispatched to Engine 36 in New Orleans East to complement testing at City Park, Kenner and Chalmette.

The National Weather Service predicts conditions for smoke to settle near the surface overnight, which could reduce visibility in impacted areas. The City advises motorists to exercise caution while driving during this time. The Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD), the State Police, and the New Orleans Police Department are coordinating their efforts.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and DEQ:

Smoke may cause you to cough. It can cause shortness of breath or tightness in the chest. It also can sting your eyes, nose, or throat.

These problems can begin a very short time after you breathe the smoke. You may have little warning, especially if you have lung or heart disease. Infants, children, pregnant women, older adults, and people with chronic diseases such as asthma are at greater risk from smoke.

You can take the following steps to protect yourself and your family:

- Leave the area if you are at greater risk from breathing smoke.
- While driving, be sure to set your vehicle's AC controls to re-circulate.
- Be sure to use clean filters in your home's central AC. This will aid in cleaner air inside.
- If you have window units, be sure to set your settings to re-circulate. If this function is not available, be aware you could draw in air quality similar to that on the outside of your home.
- Avoid activities that put extra demands on your lungs and heart. These include exercising or physical chores, both outdoors and indoors.
- In general, individuals with asthma, allergies, and other lung conditions should avoid prolonged exposure to the smell and continue to follow their treatment plans as determined by their health care providers.
- If you become symptomatic, seek medical advice from your health care provider.

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