



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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For Immediate Release
August 30, 2011

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Particulate matter levels at moderate levels in Baton Rouge

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality is picking up readings of moderate particulate matter at two of its air monitors in the Baton Rouge area. The department, along with the Baton Rouge Fire Department and other emergency responders throughout the area, has received numerous calls about smoke in the Baton Rouge area. Based upon meteorological data, there is a strong probability that the smoke is from a marsh fire burning outside of New Orleans.

When air quality monitors reach a certain level, it is registered as an air quality alert based upon the Air Quality Index. The fire continues to burn and depending on the wind direction air quality alerts and Action Days will be called as needed. Thus far the levels in the Baton Rouge area have not reached that level.

Current readings are moderate in the Baton Rouge area. At this level, known as yellow on the AQI, unusually sensitive people should limit prolonged outdoor exertion. For an orange level, children, the elderly and people with respiratory diseases, such as asthma, should avoid prolonged outdoor activities and exertion. Red is unhealthy for everyone and the AQI suggests that everyone should limit prolonged outdoor exertion.

The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals suggest, in general, individuals with asthma, allergies, and other respiratory conditions should avoid prolonged exposure to the smell and continue to follow their treatment plans as determined by their health care providers. If they become symptomatic, they should seek medical advice from their health care provider. Individuals bothered by the smell should go indoors to minimize exposure. Be sure your vehicle and home air conditioning systems are set to recirculate air.

DHH created a fact sheet on smoke, air quality and health for the public. The fact sheet provides information on things the public can do to minimize exposure and health impact. It is available at www.deq.louisiana.gov and www.dhh.la.gov

Particles in the air can cause or aggravate a number of health problems. Particles of concern include both very small, “fine” particles (that can only be seen through an electron microscope) and somewhat larger “coarse” dust particles. Very small particles with diameters less than 2.5 micrometers are called “fine particles.” They are produced any time fuels such as coal, oil, diesel or wood are burned.

DEQ continues to monitor the air from its fixed monitoring sites. Air Quality alerts will be issued as needed.

For information about air quality and for air quality forecasts, go to <http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/tabid/2505/Default.aspx>

To sign up for air quality alerts, go to www.deq.louisiana.gov/enviroflash