



## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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### **For Immediate Release**

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### **Air Quality precaution issued for New Orleans area due to marsh fire near New Orleans East**

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality is declaring an air quality precaution day today, Aug. 30, because of smoke from a fire near New Orleans that continues to be a possible health issue in the area. Air monitors in the New Orleans area have had readings of particulate matter ranging from normal to unhealthy, according to the Air Quality Index scale. These readings vary from location to location because of wind direction.

When monitors reach a certain level, it is registered as an air quality alert based upon the Air Quality Index. Because the fire will be burning, and depending on the wind direction, air quality alerts and Action Days will be called as needed.

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's and your home's air conditioning systems are set to recirculate air.

DHH continues to do surveillance of New Orleans and North Shore area hospitals. Over the past three days DHH surveillance of five New Orleans and two North Shore area hospitals has shown a slight increase in the number of patients with upper respiratory irritation and asthma problems. New Orleans area hospitals saw 12 patients with asthma problems and 31 with upper respiratory tract infection and North Shore hospitals saw 8 patients with asthma problems and 5 patients with upper respiratory tract infections.

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. The fact sheet has been distributed to local governments and the public in areas that are impacted by the smoke. It is available at [www.deq.louisiana.gov](http://www.deq.louisiana.gov) and [www.dhh.la.gov](http://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. Fine particles have been more clearly linked to the most serious health problems. 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. Fine particles come from fuel used in everything from power plants to wood stoves and motor vehicles (e.g., cars, trucks, buses and marine engines). These particles are even produced by construction equipment, agricultural burning and forest fires.

The marsh fire, which is in an isolated area, is burning subsurface and is inaccessible by land. DEQ continues to monitor the air from its fixed monitoring sites and with the Mobile Air Monitoring Laboratory. 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>

Citizens and the regulated community can contact the SPOC line to report environmental concerns during business hours, at 225-219-3640 or Toll Free 1-888-763-5424.

To sign up for air quality alerts, go to [www.deq.louisiana.gov/enviroflash](http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/enviroflash)