



## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

BOBBY JINDAL  
GOVERNOR

PEGGY M. HATCH  
SECRETARY

### For Immediate Release

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**Contact:** Jean Kelly

**Phone:** 225-219-3966

### **Particulate matter levels unhealthy for sensitive people in Baton Rouge, New Orleans**

**BATON ROUGE** – This morning, on Aug. 31, DEQ air quality monitors in the New Orleans and Baton Rouge areas show particulate matter to be at a level that is unhealthy for sensitive groups. An air quality alert has been issued. Sensitive people, children and the elderly should limit prolonged activity at this level, which is orange on the Air Quality Index. Because a marsh fire continues to burn in the Bayou Sauvage area of eastern New Orleans, particulate matter levels in southeast Louisiana could fluctuate between moderate (yellow on the AQI), and unhealthy (red on the AQI) depending on weather conditions.

Particulate matter consists of very small, fine particles that in the air can cause or aggravate a number of health problems. People with asthma, allergies and other respiratory conditions to avoid being outside for long periods of time. Other individuals should avoid exertion and prolonged activity outdoors when smoke is present. Seek medical care if you experience difficulty breathing or health-related issues.

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 ill, they should seek medical advice from their health care provider. Individuals bothered by the smell should go indoors to minimize exposure. Run an air conditioner or central air conditioning system if you have one. If the air conditioner provides a fresh air option, keep the fresh-air intake closed to prevent smoke from getting inside. Also, set your vehicle's air conditioning systems 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](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. 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](http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/enviroflash)

To learn more about the air quality index, go to: [www.airnow.gov/index.cfm?action=aqibasics.aqi](http://www.airnow.gov/index.cfm?action=aqibasics.aqi)