



September 8, 2020

AIR QUALITY ADVISORY

Metro Vancouver is now issuing an Air Quality Advisory for Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley Regional District because of high concentrations of **fine particulate matter** that are expected to persist through at least tonight. Smoke from wildfires burning in Washington, Oregon and California moved over our region this morning and is now impacting ground-level fine particulate matter concentrations.

Smoke concentrations may vary widely across the region as winds and temperatures change, and as wildfire behaviour changes.

Fine particulate matter, also known as PM_{2.5}, refers to airborne solid or liquid droplets with a diameter of 2.5 micrometres (µm) or less. PM_{2.5} can easily penetrate indoors because of its small size.

Persons with chronic underlying medical conditions or acute infections such as COVID-19 should postpone or reduce outdoor physical activity until the advisory is lifted, especially if breathing feels uncomfortable. Exposure to PM_{2.5} is particularly a concern for people with underlying conditions such as lung disease, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, and/or diabetes, individuals with respiratory infections such as COVID-19, pregnant women and infants, children, and older adults. Individuals who are socially marginalized may also be at elevated risk.

As we are in the summer season with warm temperatures, it is also important to stay cool and hydrated. Indoor spaces with HEPA air cleaner filtration and air conditioning may offer relief from both heat and air pollution, but physical distancing guidelines for COVID-19 should still

be observed. If you are experiencing symptoms such as chest discomfort, shortness of breath, coughing or wheezing, seek prompt medical attention. Call 9-1-1 in the case of an emergency.

Metro Vancouver works in cooperation with Environment and Climate Change Canada, Fraser Valley Regional District and B.C. Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy to look after air quality.

Information about real-time air quality readings for Metro Vancouver and Fraser Valley communities and potential health impacts can be found at www.airmap.ca and <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/bcairquality/readings/find-stations-map.html>.

To sign up for air quality alerts in your area, go to:

<http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/air-quality/mailling-list>

For more information, contact:

Metro Vancouver Information Centre at 604-432-6200

BACKGROUND

What is fine particulate matter?

Fine particulate matter, also known as **PM_{2.5}**, refers to airborne solid or liquid droplets with a diameter of 2.5 micrometres (µm) or less. PM_{2.5} can easily penetrate indoors because of its small size. PM_{2.5} concentrations tend to be highest around busy roads, industrial operations, major ports as well as areas with residential wood burning.

Tips to reduce your personal health risk:

- Avoid roads with heavy vehicle traffic and areas with wood smoke.
- Stay cool and drink plenty of water.
- Continue to manage acute infections such as COVID-19, or pre-existing chronic medical conditions such as lung disease, heart disease, COPD, asthma, and/or diabetes. If symptoms continue to be bothersome, seek medical attention.
- Maintaining good overall health and avoiding smoking is a good way to prevent health effects resulting from short-term exposure to air pollution.

And especially for persons with chronic underlying medical conditions:

- Stay in a cool, air-conditioned environment and reduce indoor pollution sources such as smoking, burning other materials, and vacuuming.
- Run an air cleaner. Some [room air cleaners](#), such as those with HEPA filters, can help reduce indoor particulate levels provided they are the right size for your home and filters are changed regularly.
- Consider taking shelter in air-conditioned buildings which have large indoor volumes and limited entry of outdoor air, but be aware that space may be limited due to physical distancing guidelines for COVID-19.

Voluntary emission reduction actions

Reducing sources of fine particulates throughout Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley will be beneficial to air quality. Actions people can take:

- Minimize the use of diesel powered equipment.
- Follow local regulations for recreational fires. Avoid lighting a fire where possible.

Additional Information

- Fine particulate matter is emitted from transportation sources, non-road engines, heating and burning.
- Fine particulate matter levels are compared to medium-term (24-hour) objectives.

Under provincial legislation, Metro Vancouver is responsible for monitoring air quality, controlling industrial, commercial and some residential emissions, creating long-term plans, and conducting emission inventories for the Metro Vancouver region.

To help reduce air emissions throughout the Lower Mainland, Metro Vancouver works cooperatively with Fraser Valley Regional District, B.C. Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, Environment and Climate Change Canada and other agencies to develop and implement emission reduction programs for businesses and local residents. Further information about air quality programs in the region can be found on Metro Vancouver's website at www.metrovancouver.org.

Metro Vancouver is a federation of 21 municipalities, one Electoral Area and one Treaty First Nation that collaboratively plans for and delivers regional-scale services. Its core services are drinking water, wastewater treatment and solid waste management. Metro Vancouver also regulates air quality, plans for urban growth, manages a regional parks system and provides affordable housing. The regional district is governed by a Board of Directors of elected officials from each local authority.



SERVICES AND SOLUTIONS FOR A LIVABLE REGION

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