

# **JOINT PUBLIC INFORMATION RELEASE LAKE COUNTY**

## **HEALTH DEPARTMENT & AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT**

### **CONTACT**

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## **Unhealthy / Hazardous Smoke Impacting Air Quality in Lake County Caution is Recommended**

The Clayton fire burning in the Lower Lake area is resulting in significantly degraded air quality in localized areas of Lake County. Current weather forecast is for variable east and northeast winds today, which may result in more smoke in Lake County. Weather patterns can greatly fluctuate in the immediate area of the wildfire. Smoke can be expected to intrude significantly in the south part of the county, and may be noticeable in all other areas of the County.

The District is implementing an air monitoring plan and will provide updates for the duration of the fire. Current air quality in most of the County is generally considered good, though conditions in localized areas near the fire and downwind of the fire are very likely to be unhealthy for all people, and especially those with sensitivities to degraded air quality. Hazardous air quality will remain a potential health hazard for the fire fighters and anyone in the downwind plume of the fire. Please note that while poor air quality can generally be seen and smelled as smoke, wildfires also release many other air contaminants that are not visible as smoke particles.

Lake County Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Tait advises area residents to be cautious in resuming normal outdoor activities. "Variable weather conditions and ongoing fire activity may result in localized areas of reduced air quality, which could still pose health risks to people with underlying health conditions. Since we can't always predict when and where 'pockets' of poorer air quality may occur, it is prudent to be careful until conditions stabilize." Smokey conditions can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and air passages, which can be hazardous in young children, the elderly, individuals with heart conditions or chronic lung disease such as asthma, bronchitis and other respiratory conditions.

Individuals with asthma, bronchitis, emphysema and other lung or heart diseases should carefully adhere to their medical treatment plans and maintain at least a five-day supply of prescribed medications. They should limit outdoor activity and unnecessary physical

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exertion. Air conditioning that re-circulates indoor air should be used, when available. Drinking plenty of water to avoid drying of the airways is recommended, unless restricted for medical reasons.

Dust masks are useful in filtering out the ash and larger particles that are encountered in burn areas, but they are not protective against the most harmful pollutants caused by wildfire smoke. Air purifying respirators, such as N-95 filtering face pieces, may be effective in reducing harmful particulate matter, but can also increase the work of breathing, lead to physiologic stress, and are not recommended as a general protective measure.

Localized areas of unhealthy air, regional haze, and particulate from this fire are expected to continue throughout Lake County until the fire is out.