

# MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE



Department of Health and Human Services &

Anchorage Fire Department

907-343-6718

*Mayor Dan Sullivan*

## JOINT MEDIA RELEASE/PRESS CONFERENCE

For immediate release: May 21, 2014

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### **AIR QUALITY HEALTH ADVISORY** **Smoke from Tyonek wild fire affects Anchorage**

The Anchorage Fire Department & Department of Health and Human Services is holding a press conference at 2:30 PM today at Fire Station 1, located at 122 East 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue (4<sup>th</sup> & A Street) to alert citizens about the wild fire smoke present in some Anchorage locations at concentrations that are considered unhealthy for sensitive groups. While smoke conditions are variable around Anchorage, concentrations appear to be greatest in south Anchorage and along the lower hillside. Air quality is expected to improve in the afternoon hours as air flow improves. 911 Dispatchers are receiving a significant number of calls, reporting the smoke. Citizens should not hesitate to report all fires immediately by calling 911, however, please verify that you are not calling about the "drift" smoke.

Tyonek is located along the west shore of Cook Inlet. Smoke from the Tyonek fire accumulated in a weak inversion layer overnight, and some of that accumulated smoke reached the Anchorage bowl. While the National Weather Service expects a similar inversion to form overnight, air flow at the inversion height is expected to be more from the north which could result in less smoke reaching the Anchorage area tomorrow.

Although air quality conditions in Eagle River and east Anchorage have remained in the good category, the Anchorage Health Department has received reports of visibility of less than 5 miles as a result of smoke in some locations. According to guidelines published by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, when smoke results in visibility of three to five miles, air quality conditions may be considered unhealthy for sensitive groups. Guidelines for evaluating air quality based on visibility can be found at this web address:

<http://co.fairbanks.ak.us/airquality/Docs/ParticulateLevels.pdf>

Smoke inhalation may cause headaches, eye inflammation, sinus problems, and irritation of the upper airways. Air pollutants have a greater affect on children, the elderly and individuals with health conditions such as heart and lung ailments. Those who are especially sensitive to air pollution are advised to remain indoors whenever concentrations are forecasted reach or exceed levels considered unhealthy for sensitive groups (i.e. an air quality index value exceeding 100). Such individuals are also advised to avoid strenuous exercise whenever a health advisory is in effect. You are advised to contact your health care provider if you have concerns.

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The Anchorage Health Department will continue to monitor and report conditions while there remains a likelihood of potentially unhealthful air quality conditions. The current air quality forecast can be obtained by calling the air quality hotline at 343-4899.

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