



## *DEC News Release*

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **DEC Updates Air Quality Alert for Interior Alaska**

**July 15, 2004**— The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) continues to classify smoke levels in the vicinity of Venetie, Eagle and Chicken as **“very unhealthy to hazardous”** and has extended their air quality **alert**. Currently, smoke from the Solstice Complex, Boundary, Wolf Creek, Chandalar, Taylor Complex and Eagle Complex fires continues to impact Bettles, Venetie, the upper Yukon Valley airshed, the Taylor Highway, Chicken and Eagle.

The advisory includes the areas of Fairbanks and Fort Yukon where smoke levels are again exceeding federal air quality standards and air quality is considered **unhealthy for sensitive individuals to unhealthy for all individuals** depending on the local smoke concentrations. Conditions are expected to remain variable over the next several days as smoke moves throughout the upper Tanana Valley.

Airborne levels of fine particulates also continue to plague eastern Interior Alaska due to wildfire activity in the upper Yukon Valley, northeast of Fairbanks, northeast of Delta Junction, west of Fort Yukon and along the Taylor Highway, and are exceeding federal air quality standards.

**DEC advises everyone with respiratory illness or heart disease, the elderly and children, to avoid outside activity when near areas in Interior Alaska which are affected by forest fire smoke. All others are cautioned to avoid exposure and outdoor exertion.**

Particulate levels may be significantly higher or lower depending on proximity to the smoke. The **public is advised to take precautionary action when in smoke-filled areas**. This air quality alert applies to any area of Interior Alaska north of the Alaska Range which may be impacted by smoke.

Air quality levels are only monitored in Fairbanks. For areas without monitoring equipment, the following can serve as a guide to air quality and potential health impacts:

<b><u>Visibility</u></b>	<b><u>Air Quality</u></b>
10+ miles	Good
6 - 9 miles	Moderate
3 - 5 miles	Unhealthy for sensitive groups
1.5 - 2.5 miles	Unhealthy
0.9 - 1.4 miles	Very Unhealthy
0.8 miles or less	Hazardous

This alert will expire on Friday, July 23, 2004, or sooner should the smoke diminish. This advisory may be extended if fire activity persists.

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For Alaska wildfire updates, go to <http://www.state.ak.us/dec/index.htm>