



DEC News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DEC Issues Air Quality Alert for Eastern Alaska, North of AK Range, East of Big Delta

July 2, 2004--Airborne levels of fine particulates (smoke) remain high over eastern Alaska and northwestern Canada due to wildfire activity. Air quality levels are estimated to range from **hazardous for sensitive individuals to unhealthy for all persons.**

DEC advises everyone with respiratory illness or heart disease, the elderly and children, to avoid outside activity when in the presence of forest fire smoke. All others are cautioned to avoid outdoor activities or physical exertion.

An individual's best course of action is to minimize exposure to smoke. Personal impact will depend on personal sensitivity and proximity/downwind distance to the fires. Air quality will generally improve with distance and upwind direction from a fire, but will remain poor in areas with smoke.

Smoke has been reported as far south as the coastal mountains. Smoke is impacting portions of the Tanana River Valley east of Big Delta, including the ALCAN Highway, Tok, Beaver Creek and into western Yukon Territory. Fire activity is most active up the Taylor Highway towards Chicken and Eagle. Fire threat in the region will continue to remain high through Saturday when winds are expected to become southerly. Weather forecasts call for improved humidity and cloud cover which should help fire fighting, but may not significantly reduce smoke levels in all parts of the region.

Air quality levels are not currently being monitored in the Tanana River Valley. Particulate levels may be significantly higher or lower throughout the region depending on one's proximity to the smoke. This air quality advisory applies to any area of eastern Alaska, north of the Alaska Range and east of Big Delta, which may be impacted by smoke.

This advisory will expire on Friday July 9, 2004, or sooner should smoke diminish. This advisory may be extended if fire activity persists.

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