



DEC News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEC Extends Interior Alaska Air Quality Alert

July 9, 2004— The Department of Environmental Conservation 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.

Communities west and south of fire activity, Fairbanks, and Delta Junction have been removed from the Alert and are classified as having “good” air quality. Fort Yukon has been re-included as smoke from the west moves into their area.

Airborne levels of fine particulates (smoke) 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. These conditions are expected to persist over the week.

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

Air quality levels in the vicinity of fires are estimated to be in the **unhealthy to hazardous** air quality range. Air Quality will improve with distance and upwind direction from the fire, but will remain unhealthy to hazardous in areas with smoke.

Although conditions remain variable throughout the region, the smoke threat is expected to remain high for the next 5 to 7 days or until the area receives significant rain. Currently, smoke from the Solstice Complex, Boundary, Wolf Creek, Taylor Complex and Eagle Complex fires continues to impact Venetie, the upper Yukon Valley airshed, the Taylor Highway, Chicken and Eagle.

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Air quality levels are only monitored in Fairbanks, and forecasted air quality levels are based on local visibility. Particulate levels may be significantly higher or lower throughout the Region depending on proximity to the smoke. This air quality alert applies to any area of eastern Interior Alaska north of the Alaska Range which may be impacted by smoke.

This alert will expire on Friday, July 16, 2004, or sooner should the smoke diminish. This advisory may be extended if fire activity persists.

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Note: While the smoke may have cleared in Fairbanks the central part of the state is still experiencing considerable fire activity. Smoke will continue to move with the winds.

For areas without monitoring, the following can serve as a guide to the potential health impacts.

<u>Visibility</u>	<u>Air Quality</u>
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