



For Immediate Release

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## **Alaska Departments Issue Caution Due to Smoke from Southcentral Wildfires**

*Air quality advisories remain in effect*

ANCHORAGE — The Alaska departments of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and Environmental Conservation (DEC) want Southcentral residents to be aware of the health dangers from smoke from the Tyonek and Funny River wildfires. Winds have blown smoke from these fires into the Anchorage area, Palmer area and communities on the Kenai Peninsula. Currently there are air quality advisories in effect for each of these areas.

Wildfire smoke is a mixture of gases and fine particles from burning trees and other plant materials. Smoke can cause coughing, scratchy throat, irritated sinuses, shortness of breath, chest pain, headaches, stinging eyes, and runny nose. Those who have heart disease might experience chest pain, rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, and fatigue. Smoke may worsen symptoms for people who have pre-existing respiratory conditions, such as respiratory allergies, asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

As such, people in affected communities should regularly check the Alaska DEC Division of Air Quality websites for changes in air quality advisories (see web link below), and follow the cautionary statements as outlined in this table, [http://www.epi.alaska.gov/eh/wildfire/EPA\\_AirQualityIndex.pdf](http://www.epi.alaska.gov/eh/wildfire/EPA_AirQualityIndex.pdf). People who are concerned about their own health or the health of others as a result of the smoke, should contact their health care provider.

### Additional Resources:

- To view air quality alerts, and sign up for air quality advisories, visit: <http://dec.alaska.gov/Applications/Air/airtoolsweb/Advisories>.
- For more information on the Tyonek and Funny River Horse Trails fires, visit: <http://akfireinfo.com/> or <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/3878>.
- For more information on the health effects of breathing wildfire smoke, visit: <http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/eh/wildfire/default.htm>.

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