Thursday, September 05, 2019

Crook County Health Department Media Release - For Immediate Distribution

Smoky Air Could Cause Health Problems

With the current Canyon 66 Prescribed Fire about 30 miles east of Prineville on the Ochoco National Forest also comes very smoky air. The Crook County Public Health Officials are urging people across Central Oregon to take precautions as smoke from wildfires and prescribed burns affect the air quality and may cause health problems.

“The combination of higher temperatures and fire smoke in the area may increase the risk of illness especially for older adults, young children, and people with asthma, respiratory, or heart conditions,” said Vicky Ryan, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator at the Crook County Health Department.

Effects of smoke exposure

- Particles in the air can irritate the eyes, nose, and throat, causing cough, phlegm production, wheezing, difficulty breathing, headache and inflammation in the lungs.
- Most healthy adults and children will recover quickly from smoke exposure and will not suffer long-term health consequences.
- Persons with compromised airways such as lung disease are at risk for exacerbations.
- Persons with heart disease may experience shortness of breath, chest tightness or pain, palpitations, or unusual fatigue or lightheadedness.
- Children are at higher risk from smoke exposure, because they tend to spend more time outside, engage in more vigorous activity, and inhale more air per pound of body weight.
- Pregnant women are at increased risk of adverse health effects, as is the developing fetus.
- Persons age 65 and older are more likely to have pre-existing heart or lung disease, and have a greater risk than younger persons of hospitalization and premature death associated with smoke exposure.

Public health officials urge all Crook County residents to take the following precautions to avoid health problems during smoky conditions.

- Reduce the amount of time spent outdoors. This can usually provide some protection, especially in a tightly closed, air-conditioned house in which the air conditioner can be set to re-circulate air instead of bringing in outdoor air.
Reduce the amount of time engaged in vigorous outdoor physical activity. This can be an important and effective strategy to decrease exposure to inhaled air pollutants and minimize health risks during a smoke event.

- Reduce other sources of indoor air pollution such as burning cigarettes and candles; using gas, propane, and wood burning stoves and furnaces; cooking; and vacuuming.
- Individuals with heart disease or lung diseases such as asthma should follow their health care providers’ advice about prevention and treatment of symptoms.
- If you have no other way to get away from the smoke in the air check out the designated clean air spaces in the Prineville area such as the Public Library for all ages and Lutheran Community Services NW Community Center for adults.

✓ For more information about your community’s air quality, visit: [http://airnow.gov/](http://airnow.gov/)

✓ Refer to the Oregon Smoke Blog: [http://oregonsmoke.blogspot.com](http://oregonsmoke.blogspot.com) for smoke information in your area as a tool to help guide your health behaviors and actions.

✓ For additional information, visit Oregon Public Health’s Prepare for Wildfire page: [http://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/Preparedness/Prepare/Pages/PrepareForWildfire.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/Preparedness/Prepare/Pages/PrepareForWildfire.aspx)

For more information or general questions contact:

Vicky Ryan
Emergency Preparedness Coordinator - Crook County Health Department
Crook County Public Information Officer
541-323-2467 – Direct line
541-233-8504 – Work Cell