

Date: September 12, 2017

To: Child Care Facilities in South Zone

From: Medical Officers of Health and Environmental Public Health – South Zone

RE: Recent Ambient Air Quality and Health Concerns for Child Care Facilities in South Zone

Over the past days, special air quality statements have been issued for a number of locations across South Zone. The wildfires burning in Waterton Lakes National Park continue to produce widespread smoke and poor air quality over southwestern areas especially near the park boundaries. Over the next few days a persistent weather pattern will result in very little improvement in conditions. The poor air quality will likely continue to spread into adjacent regions by mid-week.

As air quality can vary with weather conditions and prevailing winds, it will not be the same throughout the entire zone. AHS is providing general information that may help child care facilities determine appropriate levels of response to local air quality conditions.

A child care facility's decisions regarding outdoor activity modifications can be guided by the local *Air Quality Health Index (AQHI)* for your community, which provides recommendations for at risk and general populations to reduce pollution exposure (table below). The AQHI website is: <http://airquality.alberta.ca>

Pollutants in the air, including smoke from distant wildfires, can impact people's health. Children and those with heart or lung conditions (such as asthma), are at higher risk of air quality related symptoms and illness. Regular physical activity promotes health and fitness, but outdoor activities may need to be modified during periods of increased air pollution. During periods of very poor air quality, options to consider include reducing the time and intensity of strenuous outdoor activities, moving activities indoors, or rescheduling activities to another day.

To reduce staff and child exposure to poor air quality during the advisory, child care facilities can:

- Close all outside windows and doors
- Children and staff should stay inside if having breathing difficulties
- Using an air conditioner that cools and filters air may help
- Avoid running fans or "fresh air ventilation systems" that bring more smoky outdoor air inside

More information on health effects of air quality and smoke can be found here:
<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-wildfire-smoke-and-your-health.pdf>

Individuals with health concerns related to air quality can contact Health Link to speak to a registered nurse 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at **811**.

We thank you in advance for your support on this health matter. If you have any questions, please contact Environmental Public Health at 1-844-388-6691

AQHI Health Messages (from website <http://airquality.alberta.ca>)

Each level of health risk is associated with a pair of health messages for at risk and general populations along with steps we can take to reduce pollution exposure.

Health Risk	Air Quality Health Index	Health Messages	
		At Risk Population	General Population
Low Risk	1 – 3	Enjoy your usual outdoor activities.	Ideal air quality for outdoor activities.
Moderate Risk	4 – 6	Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you are experiencing symptoms.	No need to modify your usual outdoor activities unless you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.
High Risk	7 – 10	Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also take it easy.	Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.
Very High Risk	Above 10	Avoid strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also avoid outdoor physical exertion.	Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors, especially if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.