



Ministry of
Environment



MEDIA RELEASE

AIR QUALITY ADVISORY AND OPEN BURNING RESTRICTIONS IN EFFECT FOR THE COWICHAN VALLEY, WITHIN 15 KM OF THE DUNCAN CITY HALL

(December 2, 2014 – Duncan, B.C.) The Ministry of Environment in collaboration with Island Health has issued an Air Quality Advisory for the Cowichan Valley because of high concentrations of fine particulates that are expected to persist until weather conditions change.

Persons with chronic underlying medical conditions should postpone strenuous exercise until the advisory is lifted. Staying indoors and in air conditioned spaces helps to reduce fine particulate exposure. Exposure is particularly a concern for infants, the elderly and those who have diabetes, and lung or heart disease.

Open burning restrictions are now in effect for *the Cowichan Valley* within 15 kilometres of the Duncan City Hall for a period of 3 days. No new fires may be initiated and no additional material may be added to existing fires.

For more information on burning restrictions, see the section below entitled 'Mandatory Emission Reduction Actions.' For more information on current air quality, see: www.bcairquality.ca.

Tips to reduce your personal health risk.

- Avoid areas with wood smoke.
- Continue to control medical conditions such as asthma, chronic respiratory disease and heart failure. If symptoms continue to be bothersome, seek medical attention.
- Maintaining good overall health is a good way to reduce health risks resulting from short-term exposure to air pollution.

Additional tips for those with chronic underlying medical conditions:

- Stay indoors, keep windows and doors closed and reduce indoor sources of pollution such as smoking, vacuuming and use of wood stoves.
- Run an air cleaner. Some room air cleaners, such as HEPA filters, can help reduce indoor particulate levels provided they are the right size for your home and filters are changed regularly.

- Take shelter in air-conditioned buildings which have large indoor volumes and limited entry of outdoor air.

Mandatory Emission Reduction Actions

- As pollution may occur from open burning, the Director has suspended the exemption in the Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation (Sections 2(i) and 4(2)(a)) that allows for open burning of debris to occur without a permit or approval from the Ministry of Environment. For the next three days, no new fires may be initiated in the Cowichan Valley within a 15 kilometre radius from the Duncan City Hall and pursuant to Section 4(2)(c) of the Regulation, no additional material may be added to existing fires. Contravention of these provisions may be subject to a fine under the Regulation.

Date issued: December 2, 2014



Robyn Roome
Director, Environmental Management Act
Monitoring, Compliance, and Stewardship

Voluntary Emission Reduction Actions

- Avoid the use of wood stoves and fireplaces unless this is the sole source of residential heat.
- Where wood stoves or fireplaces are the sole source of residential heat, use only CSA/EPA emissions approved wood-burning appliances and well-cured wood, and ensure an adequate supply of combustion air. Follow local woodstove bylaw requirements.
- Follow local backyard burning bylaws and avoid backyard burning where a bylaw does not exist.
- Reduce the use and idling of vehicles.

Additional Information

- Fine particulate (PM_{2.5}) concentrations averaged over 24 hours, were 32 micrograms per cubic metre ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) as of 8:00 AM this morning. This exceeds the provincial 24-hour air quality objective of 25 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.
- Sources of fine particulates contributing to this air quality episode include wood smoke (wood stoves and/or open burning) as well as emissions from commercial activities and industry, and from transportation sources such as motor vehicles and marine traffic.
- **Wood smoke concentrations are expected to be higher during the evening, overnight and early morning hours and should improve during the daylight hours.** Degraded air quality is expected to continue until there is a change in the current weather system.
- Real-time air quality information for Cowichan Valley and other B.C. communities can be found at: www.bcairquality.ca.

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