



**KANAWHA-CHARLESTON
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**
108 Lee Street, East /P.O. Box 927
Charleston, WV 25323-0927
(304) 344-KCHD (5243)
kchdvw.org



NEWS RELEASE

June 29, 2023

Contact: Lalena Price, Public Information Officer
(304) 382-4949; lalena.d.price@wv.gov

Kanawha-Charleston Health Officer Cautions Sensitive Groups About Wildfire Smoke

CHARLESTON, W.VA. — Dr. Steven Eshenaur, Kanawha-Charleston Health Officer, cautions that the smoky haze from Canadian wildfires that has settled into the Kanawha Valley region is a health threat to those with breathing challenges.

Air Quality Index scores for most of West Virginia are in the 151-200 range. An AQI of 0-50 is normal. This means that sensitive groups – children, the elderly, people with heart disease, asthma, COPD, emphysema, lung cancer, or other sensitivities – are at risk.

“If you have trouble breathing for any reason, you should stay indoors until the haze dissipates,” Eshenaur advised. “If you absolutely must go outside, you should wear an N-95 mask to block the fine particulate matter in the smoke from your airways.”

The haze is expected to begin improving this evening with an Air Quality Alert in place until tomorrow morning when rain is predicted for the weekend, according to the National Weather Service in Charleston. Until the air clears, Eshenaur discouraged outside activities for a lot of people in the valley. “Smoke inhalation isn’t good for anyone, so avoid strenuous exercise in this kind of air quality situation. Consider staying inside and setting your AC on recirculation mode until the air clears. If you must go out, take it easy and make it quick!”

To monitor air quality in your area, visit www.airnow.gov.