

# AIR QUALITY HEALTH HAZARDS

## Be Prepared for Montana's Wild Land Fire Season



Wildfire smoke can be a health risk for some people. In Montana it can be one of the most serious health complications in the environment, especially for children, the elderly, and people who have existing heart or lung disease. Be prepared to take necessary precautions during the fire season. If you can smell and see smoke, you should limit your exposure.

### Health Effects Categories

**Hazardous**



Serious risk of respiratory effects in the general population. Avoid any outdoor exertion. Those with respiratory conditions, the elderly, and children should remain indoors.

**Very unhealthy**



Significant risk of respiratory effects in the general population. Those with respiratory conditions, the elderly, and children should avoid outdoor activity; everyone else avoid prolonged exertion.

**Unhealthy**



Increased aggravation of those with lung and heart disease. People with respiratory problems, the elderly, and children should avoid exertion; everyone else should limit prolonged exertion.

**Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups**



Increased likelihood of respiratory symptoms in sensitive individuals. People with respiratory problems, the elderly, and children should limit prolonged exertion.

**Moderate**



Possible aggravation of heart or lung disease among people with cardiopulmonary issues.



# USE VISIBILITY RANGES TO DETERMINE THE HEALTH CATEGORY OF THE AIR

## Visibility Range Procedure

You can determine the health effects index of the air by following the procedure below.

- 1 Face away from the sun.
- 2 Determine the limit of your visible range by looking for targets at known distances (miles).
- 3 Visible range is that point at which even high contrast objects totally disappear.
- 4 Use the values to the right to determine the local forest fire smoke category.

<b>If you can see:</b>	<b>The air is:</b>
Less than 1.3 miles	<b>Hazardous</b>
1.3 to 2.1 miles	<b>Very unhealthy</b>
2.2 to 5 miles	<b>Unhealthy</b>
5.1 to 8.7 miles	<b>Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups</b>
8.8 to 13.3 miles	<b>Moderate</b>



For more information on the health effect categories and visibility index, visit the "Smoke Updates" website run by the Department of Environmental Quality at <http://deq.mt.gov/fireupdates/index.asp>.

Air monitoring stations exist in Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Great Falls, Hamilton, Helena, Kalispell, Libby, Missoula, and West Yellowstone. The Smoke Updates website has daily updates on the health effect category at these sites based on measured particulate matter levels. All other locations must determine the health effect category at their location based on visibility.

