

Cover Sheet

DATE: June 28, 2012

SUBJECT: Wildfire Response Information Gathering

INSTRUCTIONS:

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE to your local HAN contacts. This HAN is intended for sharing of information with DPHHS.

**For LOCAL HEALTH
DEPARTMENT reference only**

DPHHS Subject Matter Resource for more information regarding this HAN, contact:

DPHHS PHEP

By Fax 444-4199

By Phone 444-3075

By Email

HHSEOCoperations@mt.gov

**DPHHS Health Alert Hotline:
1-800-701-5769**

**DPHHS HAN Website:
www.han.mt.gov**

Remove this cover sheet before redistributing and replace it with your own.

Please ensure that DPHHS is included on your HAN distribution list.

Categories of Health Alert Messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

Please call DPHHS to update contact information at 444-0919 or 444-6906

Information Sheet

Date: June 28, 2012

Subject: Fire Season Response Preparedness

Information: Recommendations to Prepare/Respond to Wild Fires

Background

As of June 28, 2012, wildfires are impacting several communities in Montana. Governor Brian Schweitzer has signed executive order declaring emergency in the following Montana counties due to fire danger: Lewis & Clark, Jefferson, Broadwater, Madison, Musselshell, Rosebud, Custer, Treasure, Yellowstone and Big Horn Counties and the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. DPHHS is working with MTDES, American Red Cross and other partners to address some of the medical and sheltering needs of displaced individuals.

- 1) Review the public health department's role in sheltering and reach out to relevant partners to ensure contact information and plans are up to date and shared. We encourage you to pay particular attention to shelter locations and related needs of displaced individuals.
- 2) Ensure public health participation in local planning and/or EOC operations and **notify DPHHS of EOC activations by calling the DPHHS Liaison/EOC at 444-3075.**
- 3) Review information (examples attached) related to evacuations, sheltering and air quality issues that arise during wildfires and distribute as needed.

If your area is directly impacted by a wildfire event and your EOC is activated , DPHHS will be contacting you to gather basic information related to shelter/feeding operations, status of hospitals, institutions, and long term care facilities and other needs that may have been identified. DPHHS will be contacting either the lead local public health official or primary preparedness contact to gather this information.

The information we will request includes what type of operations are in place (shelter and/or feeding), what is their location, how many individuals are being served, and who is managing the operation. Other information requested regarding impact on facilities/institutions should be readily available as the details we are collecting are limited.

At present, DPHHS will share this information at least weekly with all of you, more often if conditions worsen. For more information or assistance please contact the DPHHS Operations Center at 444-3075.



Evacuating your home? Take your health with you!

WILDLAND FIRE OR
EARTHQUAKES IN MONTANA
MAY REQUIRE YOU TO
EVACUATE YOUR HOME.

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER.

In the rare event that an evacuation is ordered

When an evacuation is ordered from emergency personnel, you must act fast and follow instructions. Pay attention to local officials who will give you special instructions to follow for the situation. Be ready and make sure you stay healthy during an evacuation by reading this information sheet and gathering a "go-kit" prior to any evacuation notice. You may be directed to a shelter area and given a specific route by which to leave your home. If you don't have your own vehicle, you can make arrangements with neighbors, friends, or family members. Volunteer organizations may also be assisting with transportation.



- Prescription medicines
- Spare glasses/contact lenses
- Health records and information
- Emergency contact information
- First aid kit
- Health provider contact information
- Necessary health equipment (wheel chair, oxygen, c-pap, etc.)
- Change of clothing
- Toiletries
- Bottled water and non-perishable food

**PLAN TO BRING ANY SPECIAL HEALTH ITEMS
YOU, OR ANYONE IN YOUR CARE, MIGHT NEED**

Threats in Montana that
may trigger an evacuation
from your home

- ▶▶▶ Earthquake
- ▶▶▶ Wild land fire
- ▶▶▶ Chemical spill or explosion
- ▶▶▶ Flooding
- ▶▶▶ Severe Weather
- ▶▶▶ Other natural disaster

Evacuation Pointers

- Officials will determine the areas to be evacuated and the routes to use.
- Law enforcement agencies are typically responsible for coordinating an evacuation. Follow their directions promptly!
- You will be advised of potential evacuations as early as possible. You must take the initiative to stay informed and aware.
- Listen to your radio for announcements from law enforcement/emergency personnel.
- You may be directed a temporary assembly area for transfer to a safe location.
- Remember that evacuations may be restricted only to escorted convoys.



Create a Family Communication Plan



A good communication plan provides a central role in keeping loved ones informed and in touch; it will help to reduce anxiety at the time of, and immediately following, a disaster.

Establish a primary contact and number (preferably a relative or friend in another part of the region or out of state) who family members can call in case of emergencies. Every member of the family should know this number.

In the event that family members are separated, it is also important that daycare, work, school, and neighbors know this number.

Prepare a list of phone numbers where each family member can be reached during the day. Include a list of relatives, friends and business associates that would or should know your whereabouts in case of emergency.

During disasters, phone communications may be disrupted. Provide an alternative means for making calls, such as a special 'emergency' calling card or cell phone.

It is important to be aware of other vehicles of communication such as the Internet, e-mail communication, and HAM radio. The Red Cross is also a resource to help contact loved ones. Leave a note at your residence to let others know where you are and how you can be contacted.

Returning Home

Officials will determine when it is safe for you to return to your home as soon as they consider it safe to do so and have made the area accessible.

When you do return home:

- Be aware of downed power lines and other hazards.
- Check natural gas or propane connections, regulators, and lines before turning gas on.
- Check your home for damage, rodents, or hidden embers or smoldering fires.

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.

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



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.

