

For Immediate Release
September 18, 2020

KDHE shares steps to protect health amid potential air quality impacts from wildfires

TOPEKA – The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) wants to alert Kansans to potential air quality impacts from Western wildfire smoke. Ongoing wildfires across the Western U.S. continues to produce dense smoke that is being transported into Kansas by the atmospheric winds. While a majority of this smoke is remaining high in the atmosphere there are times when this smoke is being observed at the surface and impacting air quality. These air quality impacts may continue to be seen as long as the Western U.S. wildfires continue to burn.

Smoke can cause health problems, even in healthy individuals. Common health problems include burning eyes, runny nose, coughing and illnesses such as bronchitis. Individuals with respiratory issues, pre-existing heart or lung diseases, children and elderly may experience worse symptoms.

Steps to protect your health on days when particulate matter is present in your community include:

- Healthy people should limit or avoid strenuous outdoor exercise.
- People with respiratory or heart-related illness should remain indoors.
- People who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms in particular respiratory or heart-related symptoms, who are currently infected or recently recovered, should remain indoors.
- Help keep indoor air clean by closing doors and windows and running the air conditioners with air filters.
- Keep hydrated by drinking lots of water.
- Contact your doctor if you have symptoms such as chest pain, chest tightness, shortness of breath or severe fatigue.

Current air quality across the U.S. can be viewed online at <https://fire.airnow.gov/>.

###