



Benzie County Office
6051 Frankfort Hwy, Ste 100
Benzonia, MI 49616

Phone: 231-882-4409
Fax: 231-882-0143

www.bldhd.org

Leelanau County Office
7401 E. Duck Lake Rd
Lake Leelanau, MI 49653

Phone: 231-256-0200
Fax: 231-882-0143

June 27th, 2023

BLDHD Releases Information for Public Response to Air Quality Issues

The Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department (BLDHD) is asking residents with sensitive breathing conditions to take precautions based on current air conditions. The Michigan Department of Environmental, Great Lakes, and Energy has issued an air quality alert for the entire state today, Tuesday, June 27.

Currently air quality in Benzie and Leelanau counties is rated as “Very Unhealthy for Everyone,” with a couple of locations reaching “Hazardous for Everyone.” Widespread wildfires in Canada continue to burn and create smoke plums that contain small particles which are moving through the atmosphere. To access and monitor air quality levels on a Fire and Smoke Map, [click here](#).

“The visible haze and smell of smoke is evidence of the current condition,” says Dan Thorell, Health Officer for BLDHD. “While the current situation does not warrant panic, it is important that we inform Northwest Michigan residents to take precautions, especially older adults, children, and people who are pregnant or have lung and heart conditions.”

[Anyone can get sick](#) from exposure to enough wildfire smoke. BLDHD advises all residents to:

- **Stay inside.** The best action people can take to protect their health from wildfire smoke is to stay inside with the doors and windows closed using good air filtration (MERV-13 or better) for vents and cooling systems.
- **Use air filters to improve indoor air quality.** Whether you have a central air conditioning system or a portable room unit, use high efficiency filters to capture fine particles from smoke.

“Conditions can shift frequently,” says Dr. Joshua Meyerson, BLDHD Medical Director. “It’s important that we take these air quality issues seriously while the plume moves through our region. It’s the best way to avoid emergent breathing complications as a result.”

Here is how AirNow determines the region’s current air quality:

Very Unhealthy for Everyone air quality for PM 2.5 index of 201 – 300

All people should avoid long or intense outdoor activities. People with heart or lung disease, older adults, children and teenagers, minority populations, and outdoor workers should avoid all physical outdoor activities. Reschedule outdoor activities or move them indoors. Watch for symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath. For people with asthma, follow your action plan and keep quick relief medicine handy. For people with heart disease, symptoms such as palpitations, shortness of breath, or unusual fatigue may indicate a serious problem. If you have any of these, contact your healthcare provider.

Hazardous for Everyone air quality for PM 2.5 index of 301 – 500

All people should avoid all physical activities outdoors. People with heart or lung disease, older adults, children and teenagers, minority populations, and outdoor workers should remain indoors and keep activity levels low. Watch for symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath. For people with asthma, follow your action plan and keep quick relief medicine handy. For people with heart disease, symptoms such as palpitations, shortness of breath, or unusual fatigue may indicate a serious problem. If you have any of these, contact your health care provider.

Lesser levels and their definitions:

Moderate air quality for particulate matter (PM) 2.5 Index of 51- 100

Those who are unusually sensitive to particle pollution should consider making outdoor activities shorter and less intense. Watch for symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath. These are signs to take it easier. For everyone else, it's a good day to be outside.

Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups air quality for PM 2.5 index of 101 - 150

People with heart or lung disease, older adults, children and teenagers, minority populations, and outdoor workers should make outdoor activities shorter and less intense. It's okay to be active outdoors but take more breaks. Watch for symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath. For people with asthma, follow your action plan and keep quick relief medicine handy. For people with heart disease, symptoms such as palpitations, shortness of breath, or unusual fatigue may indicate a serious problem. If you have any of these, contact your health care provider.

Unhealthy for Everyone air quality for PM 2.5 index of 151 - 200

All people should reduce long or intense outdoor activities and take more breaks. People with heart or lung disease, older adults, children and teenagers, minority populations, and outdoor workers should avoid long or intense outdoor activities. Consider rescheduling or moving activities indoors. Watch for symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath. For people with asthma, follow your action plan and keep quick relief medicine handy. For people with heart disease, symptoms such as palpitations, shortness of breath, or unusual fatigue may indicate a serious problem. If you have any of these, contact your health care provider.

Media Contact:

Rachel Pomeroy, PIO
231-882-6085
RPomeroy@bldhd.org

###



Proud member of the [Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance](#): 7 local health departments advocating for public health.