



Tuolumne County Public Health Department

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuolumne County Air Quality Health Alert

SONORA—The Ferguson Fire, located in the Merced River Canyon area of Mariposa County, is affecting air quality in many areas in Tuolumne County. Smoke accumulation has rendered air quality unhealthy for sensitive groups in some areas and unhealthy to very unhealthy in other areas for everyone (see chart below).

The following information is provided to allow you to assess the air quality in your immediate vicinity and to provide guidance for those people who live in neighborhoods affected by poor air quality.

Because the Tuolumne County geography may entrap smoke in certain valleys and basins, the following visibility chart can be used to determine the air quality where you are. Visibility provides an excellent measure of air quality.

First identify on a map certain landmarks on the horizon. Then check to see at what distance the landmarks can no longer be seen. The distance of this landmark is the “visibility in miles.”

Air Quality Index Levels of Health Concern	Visibility in Miles	Meaning
Good	10 miles and up	Air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
Moderate	6-9 miles	Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	3-5 miles	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.
Unhealthy	1.5-2.5 miles	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Very Unhealthy	1-1.25 miles	Health alert: everyone may experience more serious health effects.
Hazardous	0.75 mile or less	Health warnings of emergency conditions. The entire population is more likely to be affected.

The following guidelines can help to prevent breathing problems during times when air quality is poor due to wildfires:

- 1) Individuals with long term health conditions like asthma, lung or heart disease should make sure that they have a supply of medications on hand and are following their caregivers' instructions.
- 2) Elderly and very young children should limit their outdoor activities when local air quality is "unhealthy for sensitive groups" (visibility less than 5 miles).
- 3) Signs that the smoke may be bothering you include coughing, scratchy throat, irritated sinuses, shortness of breath, stinging eyes or runny nose. Sometimes symptoms may even include chest pain or headaches. Consult your caregiver for worsening symptoms.
- 4) If you are advised to stay indoors, keep indoor air as clean as possible. Keep windows and doors closed unless it is extremely hot outside. Run an air conditioner if you have one, but keep the fresh-air intake closed and the filter clean to prevent outdoor smoke from getting inside. If you do not have an air conditioner and it is too warm to stay inside with the windows closed, seek shelter elsewhere.
- 5) Consider a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter to reduce breathing problems. Room air cleaners, which utilize a HEPA filter, may reduce the number of irritating fine particles in indoor air.
- 6) Do not add to indoor pollution. Do not smoke because smoking puts even more pollution into the air.

UPDATE

For residents seeking relief from the heat and smoke, the following buildings can be used during their normal business hours for respite:

- **Tuolumne County Main Library-480 Greenley Rd. Sonora. Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Phone: 533-5507**
- **Groveland Library-18990 Highway 120. Groveland. Hours: Tuesday-Thursday 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Phone: 962-6144**
- **Tuolumne City Library-18636 Main St. Tuolumne. Hours: Tuesday-Thursday 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Phone: 928-3612**
- **Twain Harte Library-18701 Tiffeni Dr. #1F. Twain Harte. Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Phone: 586-4501**
- **Tuolumne County Senior Center-540 Greenley Rd. Sonora. Hours: Monday – Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Phone: 533-2622**

The Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District will continue to monitor air quality and will provide updates with the Public Health Department as the information becomes available.