

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release - Attention Editor

DUST ADVISORY IN EFFECT FOR VERNON

(February 15, 2023 10:00 - Cranbrook) The Ministry of Environment & Climate Change Strategy in collaboration with the Interior Health Authority has issued a Dust Advisory for Vernon because of high concentrations of coarse particulate matter that are expected to persist until there is precipitation, dust suppression or a change in traffic patterns. Levels tend to be highest around busy roads and industrial operations. This advisory is in effect until further notice.

Exposure is particularly a concern for individuals with chronic conditions such as asthma, COPD, heart disease, and diabetes; respiratory infections such as COVID-19, pregnant women, infants, and older adults. Persons with chronic underlying medical conditions or acute infections should postpone or reduce strenuous exercise until the advisory is lifted. Where appropriate, maintain physical distancing. Anyone experiencing symptoms such as continuing eye or throat irritation, chest discomfort, shortness of breath, cough or wheezing, should follow the advice of their health care provider. Staying indoors helps to reduce particulate matter exposure.

Real-time air quality observations and information regarding the health effects of air pollution can be found at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/air>.

Coarse particulate matter refers to airborne solid or liquid droplets with diameters between 2.5 and 10 micrometers (μm). Together with fine particulate matter (airborne solid or liquid droplets with diameters of 2.5 μm or less), these particles are referred to as PM_{10} . Sources of PM_{10} contributing to this air quality episode include road dust from the emission of winter traction material along busy and dry road surfaces. PM_{10} can easily penetrate indoors because of their small size.

Tips to reduce your personal health risk:

- Avoid roads with heavy vehicle traffic and areas with wood smoke.
- Use common sense regarding outdoor physical activity; if your breathing becomes difficult or uncomfortable, stop or reduce the activity.
- Maintaining good overall health is a good way to reduce health risks resulting from short-term exposure to air pollution.
- Run an air cleaner. Some room air cleaners, such as HEPA filters, can help reduce indoor particulate levels provided they are the right size for your home and filters are changed regularly.

- In public spaces, buildings with large indoor volumes of filtered outside air may provide temporary relief. When indoors, ensure physical distancing guidelines for COVID-19 are observed. Be aware that space within indoor public buildings may be limited due to physical distancing guidelines for COVID-19.

Additional tips for persons with chronic underlying medical conditions:

- People with heart or respiratory conditions (including COVID-19) should watch for any change in symptoms that may be due to poor air quality exposure. If any symptoms are noted, affected individuals should take steps to reduce their exposure to poor air quality. If symptoms continue to be bothersome, seek medical attention.
- People with asthma or other chronic illness should activate their asthma or personal care plan.
- People with chronic underlying medical conditions or acute infections should postpone or reduce strenuous exercise until the advisory is lifted.
- Stay indoors, keep windows and doors closed and reduce indoor sources of pollution such as smoking, vacuuming and use of wood stoves. When indoors, ensure physical distancing guidelines for COVID-19 are observed.

Voluntary Emission Reduction Actions:

- Avoid the use of wood stoves and fireplaces unless the sole source of residential heat.
- Where woodstoves or fireplaces are the sole source of residential heat, burn dry wood and ensure an adequate supply of combustion air.
- Reduce the use and idling of vehicles.

Additional Information:

- This advisory has been triggered by high concentrations of dust, measured as PM₁₀, or particles 10 micrometers or smaller in diameter.
- The current dusty conditions are caused by road traffic stirring up winter traction materials that have accumulated on roadways over the past winter.
- Real-time air quality information from Vernon and other B.C. communities can be found at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/air>.
- The provincial air quality objective for PM₁₀ is 50 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m³), averaged over 24 hours. 24-hour average PM₁₀ concentrations are summarized below for Vernon and other communities at 10:00 MST today:

Community	Castlegar	Golden	Kelowna	Vernon
Concentration (µg/m ³)	34.6	57	18	60.3

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