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Environment, Health Departments Issue South Fork Fire Smoke Advisory

(Santa Fe, NM) — The New Mexico Environment Department and the New Mexico Department of Health today issued a health advisory for the north-central areas of New Mexico affected by smoke from the South Fork fire in the Jemez Mountains and Santa Fe National Forest.

The Department of Health recommends that sensitive groups, such as the elderly, small children, or any individual with respiratory or heart problems, leave the area where the smoke levels are within the unhealthy range (see table below) until the smoke dissipates or stay inside as much as possible. Citizens are also urged not to use swamp coolers as they will pull the smoke inside.

Air quality conditions associated with smoke are especially important for people with underlying health conditions such as asthma, emphysema, and cardiovascular disease. If symptoms associated with these pre-existing conditions do not respond to your usual recommended medications, see a health care provider immediately.

The Environment Department's Air Quality Bureau is currently monitoring particulate matter in Santa Fe at the Santa Fe Airport and the Runnels Building at the corner of Saint Francis Drive and Alta Vista Street and in Taos at the Santiago Road Fire Station. Readings from these monitors indicate that fine particulate matter suspended in the air is below the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's criteria for poor air quality. Data from these monitors is available to the public in real-time at <http://air.nmenv.state.nm.us/>.

Readings from these monitors indicate that fine particulate matter suspended in the air is below the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's criteria for poor air quality. The Santa Fe National Forest will begin monitoring soon for particulate matter in Abiquiu. However, NMED and DOH do feel that sensitive groups should practice caution until the smoke dissipates. It is also possible that readings could be higher in other areas where monitors are not present.

In areas without real-time particulate monitors, visibility can serve as a good surrogate in determining air quality. The following chart includes guidelines for extrapolating air quality from observed visibility.

Categories	Visibility in Miles
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Good	10 miles and up
Moderate	6 to 9
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	3 to 5
Unhealthy	1½ to 2½
Very Unhealthy	1 to 1¼
Hazardous	¾ mile or less

Procedure for Making Personal Observation to Determine Smoke Concentrations

- Face away from the sun
- Determine the limit of your visibility range by looking for targets at known distances (miles). Visible range is that point at which even the high contrast objects totally disappear
- After determining visibility in miles, use the chart to determine health effect and appropriate cautionary statement.

For further information on the impacts of smoke to health, go to NMED's Web page: <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/aqb/Wildfire-PM.html>, or contact Marissa Bardino, NMED Communications Director, at (505) 827-0314 or Deborah Busemeyer, DOH Communications Director at (505) 827-2619.

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