

Washington Department of Ecology news  
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## *Wildfire smoke continues to plague stressed communities*

**OLYMPIA** – The weekend weather forecast offers little relief for many smoke-blanketed communities in Eastern Washington, especially those along the eastern slopes of the Cascade Mountains, according to the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology).

“Air quality in the Wenatchee area has remained in the ‘hazardous’ category for over a week now, with each day being a little worse than the previous. Cashmere and Entiat are in a similar situation. Leavenworth, Ellensburg, the upper and lower Yakima Valley and Chelan have been recording ‘very unhealthy’ conditions. This scenario is not expected to change much over the next few days,” said Ecology forecaster Ranil Dhammapala.

A low-pressure system tonight through Saturday evening carries the threat of dry lightning in the Washington Cascades mostly south of Lake Chelan, which could spark new fires, said Dhammapala.

Air quality in the Columbia Basin and the Palouse/Spokane region has been deteriorating very gradually over the last few days and is mostly in the “unhealthy for sensitive groups” category this morning. Air in these areas may improve slightly, but not much, Saturday evening through Sunday evening.

Some cooler temperatures are on tap for Eastern Washington next week, which could help reduce fire activity. But the forecast does not call for the kind of soaking rain needed to make a significant impact.

The National Weather Service has issued [an Air Quality Alert](#) for much of eastern Washington.

Gov. Gregoire has issued [a burn ban in Eastern Washington](#), which is in effect until midnight Monday.

All residents in the Wenatchee area should stay indoors and curtail their physical activities both indoors and outside. Doors and windows should remain closed. In the remainder of the Yakima and Columbia Basin common sense precautions should be taken by everyone, but sensitive groups, such as children, the elderly and heart patients, are particularly vulnerable.

The biggest health threat comes from the fine particles in smoke. These can cause burning eyes, runny nose, bronchitis and other illnesses. Smoky air also can aggravate heart and lung diseases, and even lead to death.

You can [find news and information about smoke and wildfires](#) from a variety of state, local and federal agencies on this blog.

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**Check for air quality monitoring information:**

[www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/air/air\\_monitoring\\_data/WAQA\\_Intro\\_Page.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/air/air_monitoring_data/WAQA_Intro_Page.html)

**Read the Governor's emergency declaration:** <http://www.governor.wa.gov/news/news-view.asp?pressRelease=1967&newsType=1>

**National Weather Service Air Quality Alert:**

<http://forecast.weather.gov/wwamap/wwatxtget.php?cwa=otx&wwa=air%20quality%20alert>

**Joint blog on wildfire smoke and related information:** <http://wasmoke.blogspot.com>

**Ecology's website:** <http://www.ecy.wa.gov>

**Ecology's social media:** <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/about/newmedia.html>