



Indigenous Services  
Canada

Services aux  
Autochtones Canada



Dr. Ibrahim Khan  
Medical Health Officer  
Indigenous Services Canada  
Saskatchewan Region  
1783 Hamilton Street  
Regina, SK S4P 2B6  
Office: (306) 564-9175

Dr. Nnamdi Ndubuka  
Medical Health Officer  
Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority  
Chief Joseph Custer I.R. #201  
Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation Office Complex  
Prince Albert, SK. S6V 6Z1  
Office: (306) 953-5000

June 22, 2023

To: Chiefs and Councils, Health Directors

**RE: Guidance on dealing with air quality issues caused by wildfires**

This has been a very busy wildfire season across western Canada and many communities in Saskatchewan have already been adversely impacted. The Prime Minister recently stated that many experts expect this to be the worse year for wildfires in Canada. So, it is especially important that communities and individuals be ready for the impact of fires and the resulting smoke.

While many communities have solid evacuation plans for when fires get too close, many do not have as extensive plans for ensuring their people are safe when the threat is the smoke in the air. We urge you to begin planning for your communities' response to a prolonged period of heavy smoke in the air. You should consider arrangements to allow those most at risk from smoke to have access to clean air and moderate temperatures. This may mean establishing clean air spaces at community facilities or providing air purifiers to care homes and households with elderly, very young or pregnant individuals or those with ongoing heart or lung issues.

Arrangements should be made to ensure that anyone required to work outside on smoky days, above a four on the Air Quality Health Index, have access to and be encouraged to wear a respirator or a well-fitting mask like a N95 or KN95. When the air quality poses a high health risk- above a seven on the Index, anyone undertaking strenuous work outdoor should be wearing an appropriate mask. The elderly or those with chronic heart or lung conditions may wish to wear one of these masks whenever there is smoke in air. Adult masks are available and can be ordered following the procedure for ordering PPE. A community should have enough of these masks on hand to provide at least a week's supply for outdoor workers, the elderly and those with chronic conditions. Our colleagues from British Columbia have a good resource on wearing and fitting a mask.

Attached are some information sheets you may wish to distribute. One details how to select and wear a mask properly and the other outlines steps to keep healthy on smoky days.

As always, we are happy to discuss situations that maybe unique to your communities and our public health teams will continue to provide support, as necessary.

Stay safe and healthy,

Dr. Ibrahim Khan, Medical Health Officer  
Indigenous Services Canada, SK Region

Dr. Nnamdi Ndubuka, Medical Health Officer  
Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority Inc.