

MEDIA RELEASE
For Immediate Release - Attention Editor

AIR QUALITY ADVISORY IN EFFECT FOR VALEMOUNT

(January 18, 2024 10:00 - Prince George) The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy in collaboration with the Northern Health Authority has issued an Air Quality Advisory for Valemount due to high concentrations of fine particulate matter that are expected to persist until weather conditions change.

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://www.gov.bc.ca/airquality>.

Fine particulate matter, PM_{2.5}, refers to airborne solid or liquid droplets with diameters of 2.5 micrometres (µm) or less. PM_{2.5} levels tend to be highest around busy roads, industrial operations and neighbourhoods with residential wood burning. PM_{2.5} can easily penetrate indoors because of their small size. Common sources of PM_{2.5} that contribute to episodes of poor air quality include wood smoke (from wood stoves and/or open burning) as well as emissions from industry and transportation sources such as automobiles, trucks and rail traffic.

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.

Mandatory Emission Reduction Actions

- Valemount Bylaw No. 838 restricts the use of wood burning appliances during air quality advisories:
 - 5.1:** “A person will not use a wood-burning appliance at any time when an air quality advisory is in effect, except to heat premises that are equipped with no heating source other than the wood burning appliance.”
 - Contact the Valemount municipal office at 250-566-4435 or <https://valemount.ca> for more information on wood stove restrictions.
- Industry is required to follow permit requirements that are triggered during air quality advisories and are asked to reduce emissions wherever possible.

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

- Common sources of fine particulates that contribute to episodes of poor air quality include wood smoke (from wood stoves and/or open burning) as well as emissions from industry and transportation sources such as automobiles, trucks and rail traffic.
- This episode is expected to continue until there is a change in the current weather system.
- Real-time air quality information from Valemount and other B.C. communities can be found at: <https://www.gov.bc.ca/airquality>.
- The provincial air quality objective for PM_{2.5} is 25 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m³), averaged over 24 hours. 24-hour average PM_{2.5} concentrations are summarized below for Valemount and other communities at 10:00 PST today:

Community	Prince George	Valemount
Concentration ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)	11	65.5

Contacts

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