Fireworks: Air quality and health effects

Celebrations for the Fourth of July are just around the corner. Millions of people will be watching brilliant fireworks displays from cities, towns and neighborhoods across the country. While fireworks can be patriotic and fun to watch, most people probably do not know how fireworks might affect air quality and the health of people around them.

Smoke from fireworks contains particle pollution, such as PM2.5. Fine particles in the air can get into the lungs and may affect those with respiratory health issues. Children, elderly adults and people with respiratory or cardiac conditions are most susceptible. These individuals should limit their use of personal fireworks which produce smoke at the ground level. People with respiratory health issues are encouraged to view the fireworks from a distance.

For more information about the health effects from fireworks, please visit DNR's Fireworks – air quality and health effects webpage.

Sign up now for air quality email alerts

Now that it's officially summer, we can expect to have occasional Air Quality Advisories that inform the public about potentially unhealthy levels of ozone. While particle pollution can be a problem at any time of the year, elevated concentrations of ozone usually occur only during the warmer months. The DNR uses weather forecasts and data from air monitoring sites to determine air quality in the state and notifies residents when air pollutants reach unhealthy levels based on the Air Quality Index. On occasion, an advisory may also be issued for locations that have not yet reached unhealthy levels if conditions indicate that unhealthy levels will likely be measured soon.

You can sign up here to receive an email and/or a text message when the department issues an air quality notice. You can sign up to receive notices for one county, multiple counties, or anytime an Air Quality Advisory is issued for any Wisconsin county. Around the state, the department operates 30 ozone monitors that measure ambient ozone from April to October. To find counties that have at least one monitor, click on the OZONE button near the top of DNR's Air Quality Mapping Tool.

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