



Overview

This bulletin provides guidance to the Montana State University campus community which may assist in interpreting outdoor air quality conditions and support making informed decisions. As outdoor air quality can vary by location and change rapidly, it is important for all departments to consider current and forecast air quality in relation to outdoor work, field activities, and/or outdoor events. It is also imperative that current air quality conditions be monitored so adjustments may be made accordingly.



Air Quality Index

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Air Quality Index (AQI) as a tool for communicating outdoor air quality and related health concerns. The AQI uses 6 color-coded categories each corresponding to a range of index values. The higher the AQI value the greater the level of air pollution and the greater the health concern.

Good 0 – 50	Moderate 51 – 100	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups 101 – 150	Unhealthy 151 – 200	Very Unhealthy 201 – 300	Hazardous 301+
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Obtaining the AQI

AQI is readily available through a variety of sources which include but are not limited to:

- Air Now in partnership with EPA and other agencies:
<https://www.airnow.gov/>
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ):
<https://todaysair.mtdeq.us/>

Air Now also offers a mobile AQI app (iOS & Android) with the option of receiving notifications.

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AQI and Outdoor Activities

The following Table is provided by Air Now in the Guide for Particulate Pollution.

Complete Guide for Particulate Pollution in English & Spanish available at <https://www.airnow.gov/>.

Air Quality Index	Who Needs to be Concerned?	What Should I Do?
Good (0-50)		It's a great day to be active outside.
Moderate (51-100)	Some people who may be unusually sensitive to particle pollution.	Unusually sensitive people: Consider making outdoor activities shorter and less intense. Watch for symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath. These are signs to take it easier. Everyone else: It's a good day to be active outside.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (101-150)	Sensitive groups include people with heart or lung disease, older adults, children and teenagers, pregnant women, minority populations, and outdoor workers.	Sensitive groups: Make outdoor activities shorter and less intense. It's OK to be active outdoors, but take more breaks. Watch for symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath. People with asthma: Follow your asthma action plan and keep quick relief medicine handy. People with heart disease: Symptoms such as palpitations, shortness of breath, or unusual fatigue may indicate a serious problem. If you have any of these, contact your health care provider.
Unhealthy (151-200)	Everyone	Sensitive groups: Avoid long or intense outdoor activities. Consider rescheduling or moving activities indoors.* Everyone else: Reduce long or intense activities. Take more breaks during outdoor activities.
Very Unhealthy (201-300)	Everyone	Sensitive groups: Avoid all physical activity outdoors. Reschedule to a time when air quality is better or move activities indoors.* Everyone else: Avoid long or intense activities. Consider rescheduling or moving activities indoors.*
Hazardous (301-500)	Everyone	Everyone: Avoid all physical activity outdoors. Sensitive groups: Remain indoors and keep activity levels low. Follow tips for keeping particle levels low indoors.*

***Note:** If you don't have an air conditioner, staying inside with the windows closed may be dangerous in extremely hot weather. If you are hot, go someplace with air conditioning or check with your local government to find out if cooling centers are available in your community.

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<https://www.montana.edu/srm/>



406-994-2711



Inquiries and Questions



Questions about schedule changes, cancellations, or other potential impacts related to AQI conditions may be directed to the event or activity organizer.



If an event specific contact is not available, inquiries may be directed to the appropriate MSU department or facility responsible for the event or location.



MSU employees should contact their assigned supervisor, manager, and as designated by their department.



Additional Resources

OSHA News Release 2023:

<https://www.osha.gov/news/newsreleases/osha-national-news-release/20230609-0>

EPA Strategies to Reduce Exposure Outdoors:

<https://www.epa.gov/wildfire-smoke-course/strategies-reduce-exposure-outdoors>

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