

COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE  
COMMUNITY HEALTH AGENCY  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Released by: Sarah Mack  
Deputy Director – Public Health  
(951) 358-6181, after hours, 951-782-2974

Contact: Eric Frykman, MD  
Director, Community Health Agency/Health Officer  
(951) 358-5058

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**RIVERSIDE COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER OFFERS ADVICE TO PUBLIC ON  
HOW TO PROTECT HEALTH DURING PLASTICS PLANT FIRE**

Air quality throughout portions of Western Riverside County affected by the city of Riverside Plastics Plant fire may be unhealthful. While the specific chemicals burning are not known, they may be toxic. Dr. Eric Frykman, Riverside County Health Officer, encourages residents to take precautionary measures to protect themselves from exposure to the smoke produced by this fire, especially the elderly, the young and those with respiratory concerns such as heart condition or chronic lung disease. Residents who are not in smoky areas should be in no apparent danger.

Residents in smoky areas should stay indoors and limit their physical activity outdoors. In smoky conditions, strenuous outdoor activities, including aerobic sports and children's physical education classes, should be curtailed. Check for a "recirculation" function on your air conditioner. If smoke is present, it will be easier to breathe indoors if air is recirculating instead of drawing smoky air from outdoors.

Regarding the smoky conditions, Dr. Frykman emphasizes that infants and young children, the elderly, pregnant women, individuals with heart conditions or chronic lung

disease such as asthma and bronchitis, and individuals with other respiratory ailments are especially vulnerable. Contact your medical provider if you have symptoms such as chest pain, chest tightness, shortness of breath, or severe fatigue. This is important for not only people with chronic lung or heart disease, but also for individuals who have not been previously diagnosed with such illnesses. Smoke can "unmask" or produce symptoms of such diseases.

Individuals with asthma should consult their physician about an asthma management plan and stick to it during the unusually smoky conditions. Residents should also limit household pet's outdoor activities and ensure clean drinking water is available for them at all times.

Additionally, Dr. Frykman discourages the use of masks to protect against unhealthful air. Wearing a mask is not an effective exposure-reduction strategy during a fire. Commonly available paper dust masks, which are designed to filter out larger particles such as sawdust, offer little protection. The same is true for bandanas, wet or dry, and tissues held over the mouth or nose.

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