



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Media Contacts:

Paul Rhien, New Mexico Department of Health

Email: paul.rhien@state.nm.us

Phone: (505) 470-2290

Allison Majure, New Mexico Environment Department

Email: allison.majure@state.nm.us

Phone: (505) 231-8800

Updated Smoke Forecasts for Potential Impacts to Areas of Northern New Mexico

Wildfire Smoke May Present Health Hazards for Residents Near El Cajete and Bonita Fires

SANTA FE, NM – The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) and New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) are updating the following smoke advisories and urging residents to take precautions to protect their health from the hazards of wildfire smoke.

Bonita Fire

The [smoke advisory issued Wednesday](#) due to smoke from the lightning-caused Bonita Fire has been extended through Saturday night. An increase in fire activity Friday has resulted in an increase in smoke in Vallecitos Canyon and local communities. The upper Rio Grande Valley may continue to be impacted by smoke during nighttime and morning hours.

Increases in humidity and change in wind direction are expected Sunday morning, bringing a possibility of lower smoke concentrations on Sunday.

The [Bonita Fire](#) in the Carson National Forest is being managed by the U.S. Forest Service and has grown to 4,700 acres. Fire managers completed burning operations Thursday and Friday in order to secure the fire's perimeter. However, due to near record high temperatures and extremely low humidity, the fire crossed the containment line. The fire is 25% contained.

Residents of Vallecitos Canyon, Ojo Caliente, and Española and surrounding communities are encouraged to close their windows overnight Saturday and keep them closed until late Sunday morning or until smoke lifts and visibility improves to about five miles. Smoldering will still cause

smoke to be put in the air throughout the weekend, even after burning operations are complete. Smoke concentrations are expected to be lower by the beginning of next week.

Residents of Vallecitos Canyon and Ojo Caliente with respiratory or heart disease, adults 65 and older, young children, and pregnant women should considering relocating until air quality improves. Smoke can irritate the respiratory system, and intensify chronic heart and lung problems.

El Cajete Fire

With the [El Cajete Fire](#) burning in the Jemez Mountains, additional smoke is being released into the air, further degrading air quality. The El Cajete Fire on the Jemez Ranger District has grown to 1315 acres. The cause of the fire is under investigation. The fire is 0% contained.

Air quality monitors are in place at Jemez Springs. Although smoke impacts have been less severe than anticipated, communities with potential to be affected by wildfire smoke include Jemez Springs, Los Alamos, and White Rock.

Hot weather is expected over the next several days. Increases in humidity and change in wind direction are expected Sunday morning, bringing a possibility of lower smoke concentrations on Sunday.

Smoke forecasts are expected to change as the El Cajete Fire continues to develop.

Updates will be posted on the New Mexico Fire Information website at nmfireinfo.com.

Your eyes are useful tools to determine if it's safe to be outside. Even if you smell smoke, the air quality may still be good. Remember: if visibility is over five miles, the air quality is generally good. However, no matter how far you can see, if you are having health effects from smoke exposure then take extra care to stay inside or get to an area with better air quality. You should also see your doctor or healthcare professional as needed.

If you do not have an air conditioner and it is too warm to stay inside with the windows closed, seek shelter elsewhere such as at a relative's or friend's home. During the day consider going to public libraries, senior centers and other public places that may have air conditioning. For multi-day events, consider relocating until the air quality improves. Get more stay cool tips here: <https://nmtracking.org/health/heatstress/Heat.html>.

For guidance on visibility distances, and for more information on air quality and protecting your health, please visit <https://nmtracking.org/fire>.

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