



CATTARAUGUS COUNTY

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

1 Leo Moss Drive, Olean, NY 14760, Tel. (716)373-8050, Fax (716) 701-3737



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Cattaraugus County
Health Department

Established 1923

Kevin D. Watkins, M.D., MPH, Public Health Director

Gilbert N. Witte, M.D.
Medical Director

7/16/2026

The Cattaraugus County Health Department is advising residents to take precautions due to poor air quality caused by smoke from the ongoing wildfires in Canada. Smoke from these fires has traveled into Western New York, resulting in elevated levels of fine particulate matter (PM2.5), which can pose health risks to everyone, especially individuals in sensitive groups.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the New York State Department of Health issue Air Quality Health Advisories when the Air Quality Index (AQI) is expected to reach levels that are unhealthy for sensitive groups or higher.

Limit Outdoor Activities

Residents are encouraged to limit the amount of time spent outdoors until air quality improves, especially during periods of heavy smoke. This includes:

- Outdoor work
- Hiking and other recreational activities
- Boating, fishing, and swimming
- Running, walking, biking, and other strenuous exercise
- Youth sports and outdoor play

Protect Yourself from Smoke Exposure

To reduce exposure to wildfire smoke and poor air quality:

- Stay indoors as much as possible with windows and doors closed.
- If using a window air conditioning unit, set it to recirculate to avoid drawing outdoor air inside.
- Replace or clean filters in central air conditioning systems to improve indoor air quality.
- If available, use a portable HEPA air purifier.
- Avoid activities that increase indoor air pollution, such as burning candles, using wood-burning stoves, or vacuuming without a HEPA filter.

Individuals at Greatest Risk

The following groups are more likely to experience adverse health effects from wildfire smoke:

- Children and teenagers. Older adults, and Pregnant individuals
- People with asthma, COPD, heart disease, or other respiratory conditions
- Individuals who exercise or work outdoors





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If You Must Be Outdoors

If outdoor activities cannot be avoided:

- Wear a well-fitting N95 or KN95 respirator, which provides the best protection against fine smoke particles.
- Reduce the intensity and duration of outdoor activities.
- Take frequent breaks indoors.
- Whenever possible, postpone outdoor work, exercise, or recreation until air quality improves.

Residents who experience coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, chest pain, eye irritation, or difficulty breathing should move indoors immediately. Individuals with persistent or severe symptoms should seek medical attention promptly or call 911 if experiencing a medical emergency.

The Cattaraugus County Health Department encourages residents to monitor current air quality conditions before spending time outdoors and to follow public health recommendations until the advisory is lifted. Current air quality conditions can be found at **AirNow.gov** or

<https://www.airnow.gov/?city=Olean&state=NY&country=USA>

and through the **New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Air Quality Index (AQI)** or <https://appfactory.dec.ny.gov/AQI/> website.

The Cattaraugus County Health Department will continue to monitor conditions and provide updates as needed. Protecting your health begins with staying informed and taking simple precautions to reduce exposure during periods of poor air quality.

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KNOW THE AIR YOU'RE BREATHING

The Air Quality Index



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

The U.S. Air Quality Index (AQI) is used by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to communicate daily air quality levels. Color-coded categories inform you about air quality in your area, groups of people who may be affected, and actions you can take to reduce your exposure to air pollution.

Daily AQI Color	Level of Concern	Index Values	What does this mean for me?	What actions should I take?
Green	Good	0–50	Air quality is satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.	It's a great day to be outside.
Yellow	Moderate	51–100	Air quality is acceptable. However, there may be a risk for some people, particularly those who are very sensitive to air pollution.	Very sensitive individuals may experience health effects and should consider limiting outdoor activities. For most people without health conditions, it's a great day to be outside.
Orange	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups*	101–150	Members of sensitive groups* may experience health effects. The general public is less likely to be affected.	Sensitive groups* should make outdoor activities shorter and less intense. Take more breaks. Watch for symptoms such as coughing and shortness of breath and follow your healthcare provider's action plan.
Red	Unhealthy	151–200	Some members of the general public may experience negative health effects. Members of sensitive groups* may experience more serious health effects.	Everyone should reduce long or intense outdoor activities. Take more breaks. Sensitive groups* should move activities indoors** or reschedule outdoor events for another day. If outdoor activity is unavoidable, take frequent breaks and move indoors** if symptoms occur.
Purple	Very Unhealthy	201–300	The risk of negative health effects is increased for everyone.	Avoid all physical activity outdoors. Move indoors.** Follow specific Air Quality Health Advisory guidance.
Maroon	Hazardous	301 and higher	Emergency conditions: everyone is likely to be negatively affected.	Remain indoors** and sensitive groups* should keep all physical activity levels low indoors. Follow specific Air Quality Health Advisory guidance.

*Sensitive groups: these groups include children and teens, the elderly, pregnant people, those with lung or heart conditions, asthmatics, those who exercise or work outdoors, and those in disadvantaged communities.

**During high-heat air pollution events, seek indoor locations with air conditioning or go to a cooling center.

For more information, or to sign up for email updates from NYSDEC, visit our website:

www.dec.ny.gov

Keep an Eye on the AQI

DEC provides daily AQI forecasts for two major pollutants, ground-level ozone and particulate matter, based on EPA's National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The AQI is an 8-hour average for ozone and a 24-hour average for particulate matter. For DEC's current AQI forecasts, visit on.ny.gov/nyaqi. For real-time air pollution data from DEC's monitoring network, visit nyaqinow.net.

DEC's air quality data meet strict EPA standards and are a reliable source of AQI information. Alternative sources of real-time hourly air pollution data online and on smartphone weather apps should not be directly compared to the AQI. Most are short-term measurements, not averages, and may not be accurate.

How to Use the AQI

Check the AQI on a regular basis like you would the weather forecast. Use the AQI forecast to plan your outdoor activities. If the AQI is forecast to exceed 100, DEC and the New York State Department of Health (DOH) will issue an Air Quality Health Advisory with precautionary recommendations for affected areas.

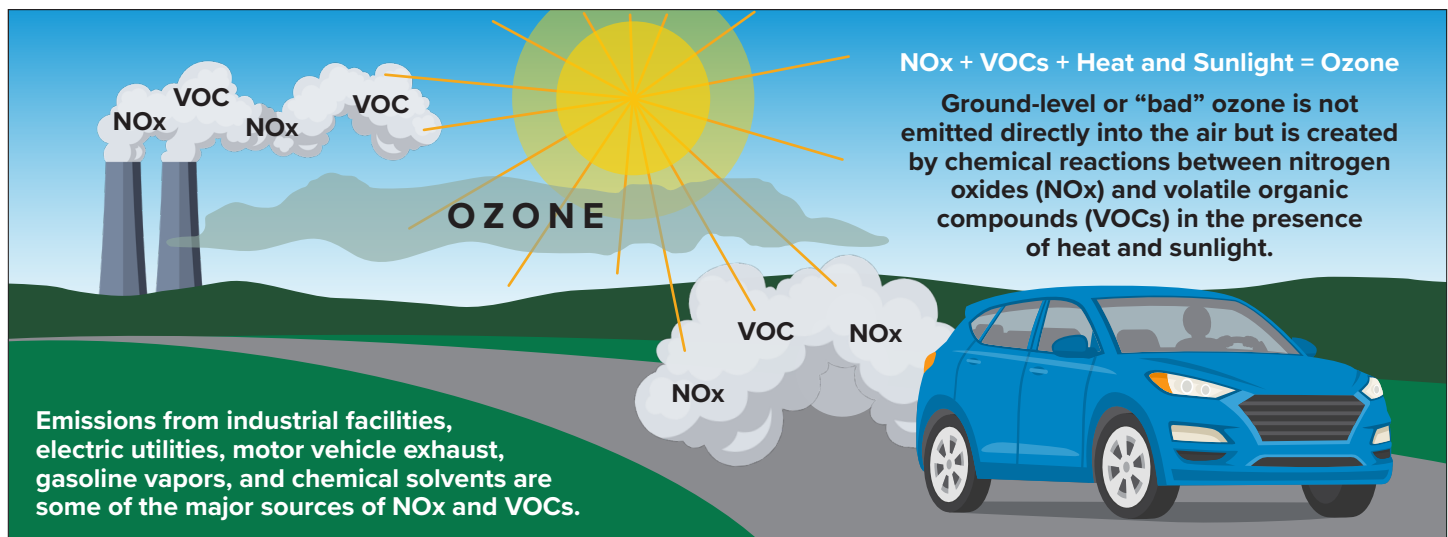
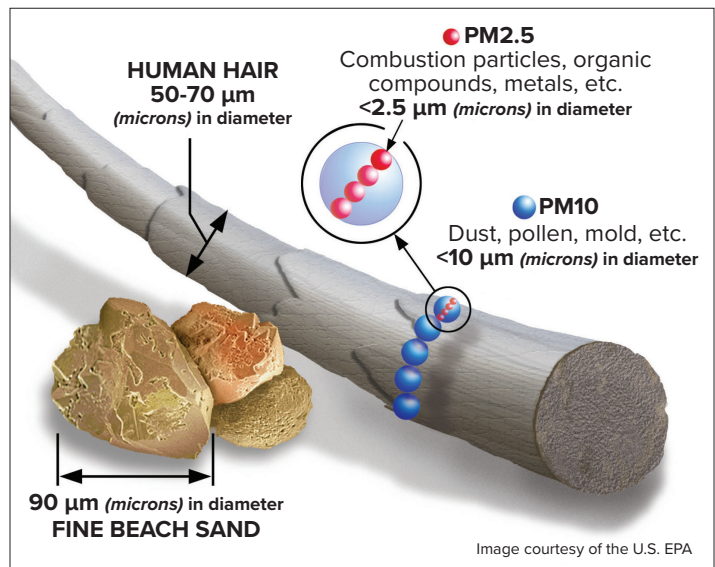
What is Ozone?

While the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere helps protect us from the sun's radiation, ground-level ozone is formed from air pollutants produced by human-made emissions and can lead to eye, nose, and throat irritation; coughing; chest pain; wheezing or shortness of breath; and may trigger asthma attacks. Ground-level ozone also contributes to haze—especially in the summer when high heat and sunlight contribute to ozone formation.

What is Particulate Matter?

Particulate matter is a mixture of solid particles and liquids in the air. Particles like dust, dirt, soot, or smoke can be seen with the naked eye, but other particles can only be seen using a microscope. Particulate matter comes in many sizes and shapes and can include hundreds of different chemicals. Some particulates are emitted directly from sources like construction sites, unpaved roads, fields, smokestacks, or fires. Emissions from power plants, industries, and automobiles also contribute to particulate formation.

The AQI is used to forecast particulate matter that can be inhaled, potentially causing serious health problems like difficulty breathing, heart and lung damage, and heart attacks. Particulate matter can also produce haze and contribute to acid rain.



How You Can Reduce Air Pollution

- Use public transportation, carpool, or ride your bike instead of driving your car.
- Reduce your energy use by lowering home thermostats in the winter and raising them in the summer.
- Go electric: switch to electric vehicles, leaf blowers, and lawn mowers.
- Don't burn garbage, and limit campfires.

For more suggestions on reducing air pollution, visit dec.ny.gov/get-involved/living-green/keep-air-clean.