

Wintertime Air Pollution in the Greater Keene Area: Increasing Awareness to Vulnerable Employees

A Communication Toolkit

Over recent years, high levels of small particle air pollution have been recorded in the greater Keene area. Poor air quality poses public health threats to vulnerable individuals such as children, seniors, and those with asthma. Fortunately, there is a way to know when these periods can occur. You have the ability to reach out to many community members through your employees.

“Air Quality Action Days” are days when dangerous levels of pollutants are expected in the atmosphere. Individuals can receive Air Quality Action Day alerts by signing up for Enviroflash, a free e-mail alert system that delivers important air quality information to your inbox based on the Air Quality Index (pictured right). We recommend one person (whether that be in IT, HR, etc.) sign up for Enviroflash and send a brief email out to employees (see reverse).

How to Receive Air Quality Action Day Alerts

1. Signing up to receive Air Quality Action Day alerts via e-mail is quick and easy- just go to www.enviroflash.info, fill in your email address and zip code, and select the type of message you would like to receive. In this case, you would opt for just Air Quality Action Day alerts (see example alert on the right).
2. When you receive an Air Quality Action Day alert in your inbox, fill out the appropriate dates in the email template provided on the following page and distributed widely.

AQI Categories	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 reducing prolonged or heavy exertion. 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.	Sensitive groups: <i>Reduce</i> prolonged or heavy exertion. It's OK to be active outside, but take more breaks, and do less activities. Watch for symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath. People with asthma should follow their asthma action plans and keep quick relief medicine handy. If you have 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: <i>Avoid</i> prolonged or heavy exertion. Consider moving activities indoors or rescheduling. Everyone else: <i>Reduce</i> prolonged or heavy exertion. Take more breaks during outdoor activities.
Very Unhealthy (201-300)	Everyone	Sensitive Groups: <i>Avoid all</i> physical activity outdoors. Move activities indoors or reschedule to a time when air quality is better. Everyone else: <i>Avoid</i> prolonged or heavy exertion. Consider moving activities indoors or rescheduling to a time when air quality is better.
Hazardous (Over 300)	Everyone	Everyone: <i>Avoid all</i> physical activity outdoors. Sensitive groups: Remain indoors and keep activity levels low. Follow tips for keeping particle levels low indoors.

Above: The Air Quality Index (AQI) is an index for reporting daily air quality. Air Quality Action Day alerts are sent when air quality levels are between 101-150 (orange).

Email Template:

Subject:

Air Quality Action Day Alert

Body:

New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) is expecting air pollution concentrations to reach unhealthy levels for sensitive individuals in populated valley areas in southwestern New Hampshire, especially in Keene, **[insert dates listed in Air Quality Action Day alert email]**. NHDES advises sensitive individuals in these areas to take precautions to protect their health by limiting prolonged exertion. Sensitive individuals include children, older adults, and anyone with heart or lung disease such as asthma, emphysema, and bronchitis. Even healthy individuals may experience mild health effects and should consider limiting strenuous or prolonged activities.

In the greater Keene area, research has suggested that high levels of fine particle pollution are linked to residential wood burning. The good news is that there are simple steps one can take to protect our air quality and our community's health. If you heat your home with wood, you can also save money and protect your home by practicing these three steps:

- Burn the right wood: Burn only dry hardwood seasoned 6 months or more.
- Use the right stove: Use an EPA certified stove for greatest efficiency (in general, those manufactured since 1990). No matter what stove you use, have your stove and chimney maintained by a technician at least annually.
- Burn the right way: Maintain a hot, bright fire and do not let the fire smolder. Burning wood safely and efficiently will save you money and protect your home.

For more information, visit www.swrpc.org/airquality.

Be sure to spread the word!

[Signature]

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