



Renfrew County and District Health Unit
"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"

Memorandum

Date: July 16, 2026

To: Healthcare partners, municipal partners and community partners

From: Dr. Jason Morgenstern

Subject: Air Quality - Yellow Level Warning

Environment and Climate Change Canada's Yellow Level Warning for air quality in Renfrew County and District (RCD) has ended. However, wildfire smoke from northwestern Ontario may continue to affect local air quality, and warnings may be reactivated if conditions worsen. Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) recommends that partners continue to reduce exposure for higher-risk populations, monitor local air quality, and support access to cleaner air spaces and masks where appropriate.

Recommended Partner Actions

- Reduce exposure for people at higher risk, particularly during periods of poor air quality or low visibility.
- Monitor air quality using trusted sources and follow health guidance for the current risk level.
- Support cleaner indoor air by keeping windows and doors closed when possible and using high-quality filtration or certified portable air cleaners.
- Support access to NIOSH-certified N95 or equivalent masks for priority populations when outdoor exposure cannot be avoided.
- Notify RCDHU if your organization or municipality is operating a clean air site so this information can be shared publicly.

High-Risk Populations

Certain populations are at greater risk of experiencing adverse health effects from poor air quality. Organizations are encouraged to implement measures to reduce exposure for priority populations whenever feasible. A full list of priority populations is available on RCDHU's [Emergency Preparedness](#) webpage.

Where to Monitor Air Quality

Partners are encouraged to use the following sources:

- [Environment Canada weather information](#) for local air quality warnings.
- [Air Quality Health Index \(AQHI\)](#) provides current risk levels and health guidance from the nearest ambient air monitoring station, the closest stations to RCD are Ottawa, North Bay, and Dorset
- [FireSmoke.ca](#) for wildfire smoke forecast maps.
- [UNBC AQmap](#) for local real-time PM_{2.5} levels

When using the AQMap use the trusted PM_{2.5} monitoring site closest to your location and follow the related AQHI health guidance. When the AQmap opens, it shows 1-hour PM_{2.5} levels using colour-coded risk levels. Trusted AQmap sites within RCD include AFFES–Smoke Lake, AQSU–Petawawa-2, Pembroke, and Renfrew.

Wildfire Smoke Health Guidance by 1- hour PM_{2.5} Level

	AQHI Category	PM _{2.5} (µg/m ³)	People at Higher Risk*	General Population
Low Risk	1-3	0-30	Enjoy your usual outdoor activities.	Ideal air quality for outdoor activities.
Moderate Risk	4-6	31 - 59	Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you are experiencing symptoms.	No need to modify your usual outdoor activities unless you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.
High Risk	7-10	60-100	Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors. Children and older adults should also take it easy.	Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.
Very High Risk	10+	101+	Avoid strenuous activities outdoors. Children and older adults should also avoid outdoor physical exertion.	Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors, especially if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.

N95 Mask Access

Community partners can order NIOSH-certified N95 masks at no cost, including delivery, through Supply Ontario by contacting sco.supplies@supplyontario.ca. RCDHU has a limited supply and may be able to support temporary access while organizations arrange their own supply. Masks should be provided with the following information sheet [Using Respirators Masks During a Wildfire Smoke Event](#).

Note: N95 or equivalent masks can help reduce exposure to fine particles in smoke but do not protect against gases in wildfire smoke. They should not be used by children under 2 years of age, people who have trouble breathing while wearing a mask, or anyone who may need help removing it.

Clean Air Sites

If your organization or municipality is operating a clean air site, please notify RCDHU so the location can be shared with the public. The County of Renfrew (COR) has agreed to develop a GIS map, similar to its cooling station map, to help residents find available clean air sites. Information about your site will be shared with the COR for inclusion on this map.

For guidance on establishing and operating a cleaner air space, visit: [Guidance for Cleaner Air Spaces during Wildfire Smoke Events - Canada.ca](#)

For more information, visit [Emergency Preparedness | Renfrew County and District Health Unit \(rcdhu.com\)](#). For questions, contact RCDHU at 613-732-3629 extension 505.