



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

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East Helena Lead Education and Abatement Program

Cold Weather Signals Start of Air-Quality Monitoring Season

Winter weather is here, and with it comes temperature inversions that can trap air pollution over the Helena Valley. On cold and windless days and nights, the quality of the air we breathe can deteriorate quickly when chimney smoke and vehicle exhaust collect under a layer of warmer air.

The Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department is monitoring air quality daily in an effort to protect the health of area residents. When air quality is poor, the department will issue temporary restrictions on indoor and outdoor burning throughout the Air Pollution Control District. The district includes the North Valley and the communities of Helena and East Helena.

During these episodes, you may be restricted from using solid-fuel burning devices like fireplaces and woodstoves until the public health risk diminishes.

This fall, the health department began enforcing new air-quality regulations proposed by the Board of Health and approved in September by the state Board of Environmental Review. Under these regulations, the department will continue to designate air quality using these terms:

- **GOOD** – Particulate levels are low, and there are no restrictions on the proper use of solid-fuel burning devices.
- **WATCH** – Air quality is moderate, and particulate levels are not expected to improve. Residents are asked to voluntarily avoid or reduce the use of solid-fuel burning devices, especially fireplaces and stoves that aren't certified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. A list of certified stoves is available on the health department website at www.lewisandclarkhealth.org under Environmental Health, Air Quality.
- **POOR** – Particulate levels are high, and the National Weather Service predicts poor dispersion conditions. Indoors, you may use only pellet stoves and EPA-certified burning devices. Smoke emitted from these devices may not exceed 20 percent opacity. Proper burning practices, outlined on the health department website, can help you stay within the opacity limit.

You may be fined if you violate burning restrictions during a “poor” air stage, so it’s important to check air quality each time you plan to burn.

To learn the daily status of local air quality, check local media, call the health department’s 24-hour air quality hotline at 406-447-1644, or sign up for daily e-mail updates at outdoorAQ@co.lewis-clark.mt.us. For more information, call the Environmental Services Division of the health department at 406-447-8351.

The mission of the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department is to improve and protect the health of all Lewis and Clark County residents.