

# Air quality advisory issued for Metro Vancouver and other parts of B.C.

BY BETHANY LINDSAY AND JOANNE LEE-YOUNG, VANCOUVER SUN JULY 6, 2015 8:33 AM

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A cruise ship sits at Canada Place while the North Shore is totally obscured by smoke Monday morning.

**Photograph by:** Ken Bradshaw, Vancouver Sun

VANCOUVER - The sun was a dim red ball in the hazy grey Metro Vancouver sky Monday morning as smoke from wildfires continued to blanket the city.

Vancouver residents awoke to a strong smell of campfires, a scent that was perceptible even inside office buildings.

The North Shore mountains were completely invisible to observers in downtown Vancouver, and the haze appeared to be growing thicker as the morning wore on. By 7:30 a.m. even the Lions Gate Bridge just appeared as a faint outline from the Vancouver Sun offices at 200 Granville St.

The haze is affecting travel for some people as well; Harbour Air Seaplanes tweeted that there are delays on its routes because of the strange weather.

An air quality advisory from Metro Vancouver issued late Sunday afternoon remained in effect, as did a special weather statement from Environment Canada. Federal government forecasters predicted modest improvements in air quality and visibility throughout the day, but said the smoke may linger for a while.

Greater Victoria and east and inland Vancouver Island area also under air quality advisories.

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[CLICK HERE](#) to read more about the wildfires in B.C.

[CLICK HERE](#) to view images of the smoke, or if using a handheld device, tap the image above and swipe.

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Meanwhile, as residents in Metro Vancouver cringed at the smell of smoke and ash across the city, Kristy Waters was much closer to the acrid haze and a darkened sky that some compared to an eclipse.

"My house is black inside just from leaving one or two windows open," said Waters, who lives just below the area where the Old Sechelt Mine fire has been growing since Thursday evening.

"All the windowsills are covered in ash. Even the toilet is all covered in ash. It smells like burning, burning smoke and it's almost like it is snowing ash."

With reports of the fire growing in size from 35 to 60 and now to 80 hectares, her parents, who live across the street, were staying in touch with "the main authorities" about possible evacuation orders.

As St Mary's Hospital in nearby Sechelt filled to at capacity and B.C. Emergency Health Services reported a significant spike in ambulance calls from smoke-related respiratory distress, Waters was taking precautions by staying inside.

On Sunday evening, the Ministry of Environment issued a smoke advisory for the Sunshine Coast and surrounding areas.

"I don't have the greatest lungs," Waters said, pointing out that "we've even been noticing the little bumblebees on our patio. They are dead and dying around all the pots. At first, they had just been flying funny."

Metro Vancouver's air quality advisory, cited "high concentrations of fine particulate matter, due to smoke from wildfires outside our region."

Fine particulate matter is made up of solid particles and liquid droplets that are 2.5 microns in diameter and less. They are also known as respirable particles because they can penetrate the human body's respiratory system farther than larger particles.

Metro Vancouver advised people with chronic underlying medical conditions to postpone strenuous exercise until the advisory is lifted.

"Staying indoors and in air-conditioned spaces helps to reduce fine particulate exposure. Exposure is particularly a concern for infants, the elderly and those who have diabetes, and lung or heart disease."

Metro expected the advisory will be in place until "there is a change in the current weather."

(For real-time air quality readings for Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley, check [airmap.ca](http://airmap.ca) and [bc.airquality.ca](http://bc.airquality.ca).)

A few hours after the Metro Vancouver advisory was hoisted, Burnaby-resident Bhuvinder Vaid was taking a stroll downtown with his parents after the World Cup final. "I have hay fever so I am feeling it a bit. Just sneezing earlier and I'm congested right now," said Vaid. "But I am taking the trade-off of the (cooler) temperature. It does smell like a camp fire."

Hailing from Tampa, Florida, soccer fans Kris Eigenbrode and Nicole Derosa were looking for a seafood restaurant of some sort to celebrate the American win and happy that they had taken their view shots of Vancouver yesterday when there was still some visibility across the harbour from Canada Place. "It's a little hazy right now. But it's okay. I mean, it's a little hard to breathe and it burns your eyes a little bit, but we're still here for the sites," said Eigenbrode. "My eyes are burning and my chest is heavy and I'm a little nauseous."

Near the entrance to Gastown, Alison and Anthony Glynne of Yorkshire, England were heading back to their hotel. She has asthma and wanted to retrieve her inhaler. "We were in Victoria yesterday and there was some haze, but it's much worse today."

Environment Canada, in an air quality statement for Metro Vancouver, said the smoke was blanketing Vancouver Island as well as the Lower Mainland. It said the wind would shift overnight and marine air should push the smoke inland through today.

In Fort St. John and surrounding areas, the Ministry of Environment and the Northern Health Authority issued an advisory due to wildfire smoke. It urged people with any of the following symptoms to contact health care providers: difficulty in breathing, chest pain or discomfort, and sudden onset of cough or irritation of airways.

"If you are experiencing symptoms, avoid strenuous outdoor activities, especially along busy traffic corridors."

"Exposure is particularly a concern for infants, the elderly and those who have underlying medical conditions such as diabetes, and lung or heart disease."

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