



District

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Air Quality Information for Students and Parents

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - Sept. 7, 2017

Brookings-Harbor School District is ready to welcome back students, starting Tuesday Sept. 12, after a one-week delay to the school year calendar due to the Chetco Bar Fire.

This wildfire and other fires across the state and region continue to impact our community with frequent changes to evacuation zones and air quality concerns.

As we begin another important year of learning and growth for our community's children, we are focused on the health and well-being of our students and staff. For the fall term, the school district will closely monitor air quality indexes and air quality warnings issued by state and federal agencies and use that information along with local observations to initiate various levels of action to protect students and staff.

Using the Air Quality Index (AQI), the district will adjust school day activities to minimize exposure to poor air quality. The AQI is an index for reporting daily air quality. The EPA calculates the AQI for five major air pollutants regulated by the Clean Air Act: ground-level ozone, particulate matter, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide.

Because wildfires often occur in remote areas, air monitoring equipment may not be available. Smoke levels can rise and fall rapidly, depending on weather conditions, including wind direction. Schools in regions of the state that do not have a working air quality monitor within a reasonable distance, such as Brookings and Harbor, have been cautioned to consider a second factor before making a final decision on school activities. The Oregon Schools Activities Association (OSAA), after consultation with the Oregon Health Authority, recommend using the 5-3-1 Visibility Index.

Making visual observations using the 5-3-1 Visibility Index is a way to estimate smoke levels and what precautions to take. This approach uses visibility to estimate air quality. When visibility is 5 to 15 miles or more, air quality is likely good to moderate; when it is 3 to 5 miles air quality may be unhealthy for sensitive groups; when it is 1 to 3 miles, air quality is likely unhealthy for all; and when it is 1 mile or less air quality is likely very unhealthy to hazardous for all.

Under the guidance of the Oregon Health Authority's public recommendations for school outdoor activities during wildfire events, the Brookings-Harbor School District will use this guide to determine appropriate activities for students:

- On **good or moderate days**, there will be no change to normal school day operations. Students will be able to be active outside with normal recess, lunch and class activities.
- On days that are **unhealthy for sensitive groups or unhealthy for all**, students will be allowed to stay indoors if they'd like. Other students that are outdoors during recess will be limited to light activities. Teachers and staff will pay special attention to students who have been identified as sensitive to air pollution and watch for any symptoms such as shortness of breath or coughing. Activities will be reduced or cease if symptoms arise.
- On days when the air quality index is **very unhealthy to hazardous**, the school district will curtail outdoor activities completely and move to indoor activities including lunch, PE and recess. The district may cancel school and cancel or reschedule athletic events, activities and community events based upon local assessments. Some sporting events or practices might be moved to an area with better air quality if one is reasonably available.

If you feel your student needs additional physical or emotional supports due to air quality or fire concerns, please contact your child's teacher or school principal. In particular, if your child has a physician-documented asthma or another respiratory issue, please make sure that your child's teacher or principal is aware with medical documentation, so that the district can establish an action plan. For information and questions, contact District Nurse Trish Walker at patriciaw@brookings.k12.or.us or 541-469-7417.

Air quality websites:

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Air Quality: www.airnow.gov

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Air Quality Index: <http://www.deq.state.or.us/aqi>

Oregon Smoke Information: oregonSmoke.blogspot.com

Additional Links/FAQ:

Air Quality and Schools (EPA, CDC and School Flag Program): <https://www3.epa.gov/airnow/flag/school-chart-2014.pdf>

Air Quality and Schools (Oregon Health Authority): <https://apps.state.or.us/Forms/Served/le8815h.pdf>

OSAA Smoke Memo: <http://www.osaa.org/docs/committees/sportsmed/smokememo.pdf>

Updated 2017 Start Dates: <http://www.brookings.k12.or.us>

2017-18 Bell and Bus Schedules: <http://www.brookings.k12.or.us/bell-and-bus-schedules.cfm>

School Closure Information: <http://www.brookings.k12.or.us/schoolclosures.cfm>

Brookings-Harbor School District: Every Student Can Succeed