

COUNTY OF



ALLEGHENY

RICH FITZGERALD
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

On behalf of the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD), I would like to pass along some very important information regarding air quality in the Mon Valley since a December 24th fire at the Clairton Coke Works. The health of the public is our primary concern and we are committed to improving air quality and keeping you informed.

The risk of Sulfur dioxide (SO₂) exceedances increased as a result of the fire. Exceedances of SO₂ are not uncommon during this time of year due to weather conditions but given the nature of the damage to the plant, we issued an alert out of an abundance of caution for sensitive populations living in the Mon Valley. Sensitive populations include those with asthma, individuals with bronchitis or emphysema, children, and the elderly. Since the alert was issued, there have been no SO₂ exceedances since January 8, 2019.

SO₂ is a respiratory irritant that it could impact sensitive populations' ability to breathe properly, causing airway inflammation in a similar manner as being exposed to allergens, such as dust mites, cigarette smoke, pet dander, or to extreme temperatures, such as seen in the county during the winter months. Also attached is an information sheet on SO₂.

We recognize you may get questions about this issue from children and families. The risk today for exceedances is low but there is still a risk while US Steel does repairs. We urge you to consider air quality and its impact on children with respiratory conditions such as asthma. We are posting information on air quality daily and if there are further problems we will make the public aware. View air quality information: <https://alleghenycounty.us/hd/DailySummary.PDF>

If air quality is poor (orange or red days) or exceedances of SO₂ occur, children with asthma should limit their outdoor exercise until air quality improves.

As always, anyone experiencing symptoms should see their primary care provider as soon as possible. In case of an emergency, dial 911 or go to the emergency room.

Please call 412-687-ACHD (2243) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Karen Hacker



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