

# Health impact from smoke rises with more intense wildfires

Other sources of air pollution are in decline in the U.S.

By **MATTHEW BROWN**  
*Associated Press*

**BILLINGS, Montana** — Climate change in the Western U.S. means more intense and frequent wildfires churning out waves of smoke that scientists say will sweep across the continent to affect tens of millions of people and cause a spike in premature deaths.

That emerging reality is prompting people in cities and rural areas alike to prepare for another summer of sooty skies along the West Coast and in the Rocky Mountains — the regions widely expected to suffer most from blazes tied to dryer, warmer conditions.

“There’s so little we can do. We have air purifiers and masks — otherwise we’re just like ‘Please don’t burn,’” said Sarah Rochelle Montoya of San Francisco, who fled her home with her husband and children last fall to escape thick smoke enveloping the city from a disastrous fire roughly 150 miles away.

Other sources of air pollution are in decline in the U.S. as coal-fired power

plants close and fewer older cars roll down highways. But those air quality gains are being erased in some areas by the ill effects of massive clouds of smoke that can spread hundreds and even thousands of miles on cross-country winds, according to researchers.

With the 2019 fire season already heating up with fires from Southern California to Canada, authorities are scrambling to better protect the public before smoke again blankets cities and towns. Officials in Seattle recently announced plans to retrofit five public buildings as smoke-free shelters.

Scientists from NASA and universities are refining satellite imagery to predict where smoke will travel and how intense it will be. Local authorities are using those forecasts to send out real-time alerts encouraging people to stay indoors when conditions turn unhealthy.

The scope of the problem is immense: Over the next three decades, more than 300 counties in the West will see more severe smoke waves from wildfires, sometimes lasting weeks longer than in years past, according to atmospheric researchers led by a team from Yale and Harvard.

For almost two weeks last year during the Camp



AP File Photo

**Smoke from the Camp Fire near Paradise, Calif., darkens the sky on Nov. 8, 2018. Tens of millions of people in the western U.S. face a growing health risk due to wildfires as more intense and frequent blazes churn out greater volumes of lung-damaging smoke, according to research scientists at NASA and several major universities.**

Fire, which killed 85 people and destroyed 14,000 homes in Paradise, California, smoke from the blaze inundated the San Francisco neighborhood where Montoya lives with her husband, Trevor McNeil, and their three children.

Lines formed outside hardware stores as people rushed to buy face masks and indoor air purifiers. The city’s famous open air cable

cars shut down. Schools kept children inside or canceled classes, and a church soup kitchen sheltered homeless people from the smoke.

Montoya’s three children have respiratory problems that their doctor says is likely a precursor to asthma, she said. That would put them among those most at-risk from being harmed by wildfire smoke, but the family was unable to find

child-sized face masks or an adequate air filter. Both were sold out everywhere they looked.

In desperation, her family ended up fleeing to a relative’s vacation home in Lake Tahoe. The children were delighted that they could go outside again.

“We really needed our kids to be able to breathe,” Montoya said. Smoke from wildfires

was once considered a fleeting nuisance except for the most vulnerable populations. But it’s now seen in some regions as a recurring and increasing public health threat, said James Crooks, a health investigator at National Jewish Health, a Denver medical center that specializes in respiratory ailments.

“There are so many fires, so many places upwind of you that you’re getting increased particle levels and increased ozone from the fires for weeks and weeks,” Crooks said.

One such place is Ashland, Oregon, a city of about 21,000 known for its summer-long Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

During each of the past two summers, Ashland had about 40 days of smoke-filled air, said Chris Chambers, wildfire division chief for the fire department. Last year, that forced cancellation of more than two dozen outdoor performances. Family physician Justin Adams said the smoke was hardest on his patients with asthma and other breathing problems and he expects some to see long-term health effects.

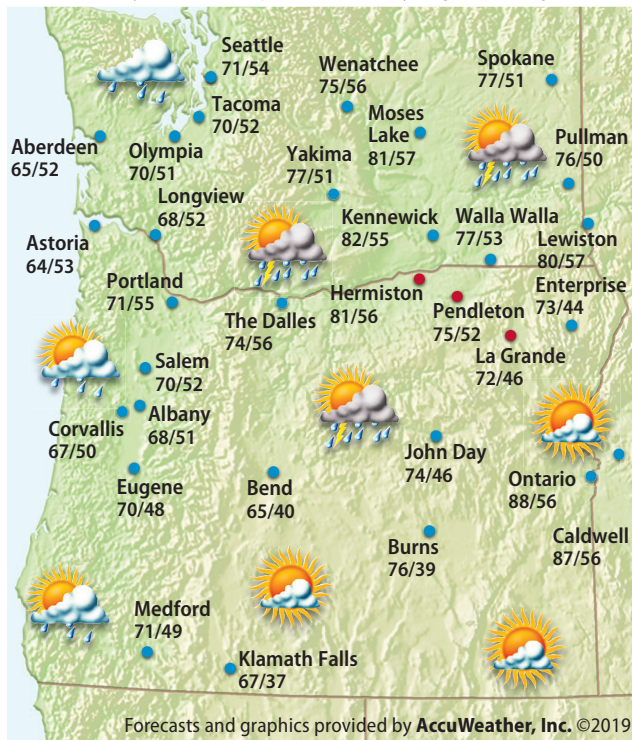
“It was essentially like they’d started smoking again for two months,” he said.

## Forecast for Pendleton Area

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Thunderstorm	Periods of sun, a t-storm; cool	A blend of sun and clouds	Partly sunny and comfortable	Partly sunny and nice
PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
75° 52°	72° 50°	74° 49°	79° 53°	83° 56°
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
81° 56°	79° 55°	79° 52°	84° 57°	88° 56°

## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



## ALMANAC

**PENDLETON** through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	76°	49°
Normals	82°	54°
Records	105° (1925)	35° (1904)

**PRECIPITATION**

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	0.09"
Normal month to date	0.99"
Year to date	9.37"
Last year to date	6.49"
Normal year to date	7.50"

**HERMISTON** through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	81°	57°
Normals	83°	55°
Records	105° (1992)	40° (1966)

**PRECIPITATION**

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	Trace
Normal month to date	0.52"
Year to date	4.42"
Last year to date	5.10"
Normal year to date	5.63"

**WINDS** (in mph)

Today	Thu.
Boardman NW 6-12	WSW 7-14
Pendleton NW 6-12	W 7-14

**SUN AND MOON**

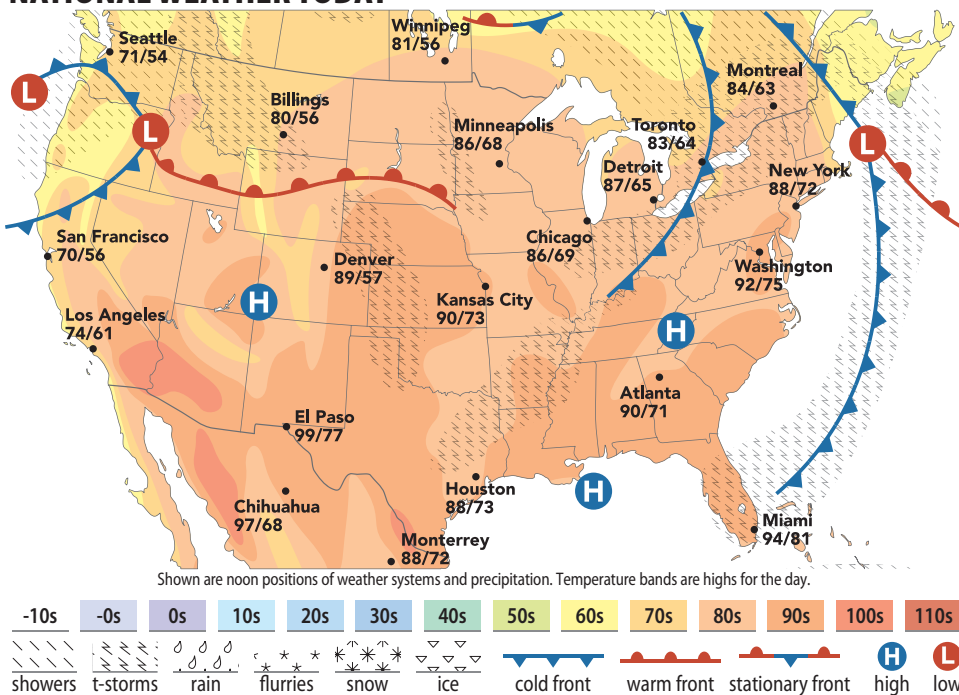
Sunrise today	5:07 a.m.
Sunset tonight	8:49 p.m.
Moonrise today	1:38 a.m.
Moonset today	2:18 p.m.

New July 2    First July 9    Full July 16    Last July 24

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)  
High 104° in Needles, Calif. Low 24° in Aspen Springs, Colo.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



# USDA grants to help farms, businesses cut energy costs

Oregon applicants received eight grants totaling \$266,490

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**  
*Capital Press*

**SALEM** — Northwest farms and businesses are getting \$324,060 in grants from USDA Rural Development to help reduce their energy costs by becoming more efficient and installing renewable energy systems.

Funding was announced on June 11 and comes from the Renewable Energy for America Program, or REAP. Oregon applicants received eight grants totaling \$266,490; Idaho applicants received five grants totaling \$40,589; and Washington applicants received two grants totaling \$16,981.

Nationwide, the USDA awarded \$1 million through REAP across 17 states and Puerto Rico. The single largest grant of \$100,000 went to the University of Oregon, which is working with the Seattle-based nonprofit Spark Northwest to assist 40 small businesses — primarily agricultural producers — in installing solar, wind, hydro, thermal and biogas energy projects.

“Business owners know that energy costs can consume a large portion of their budget,” said John Huffman, Oregon state director for USDA Rural Development. “These grants will not only help rural entrepreneurs and farmers improve their bottom line by saving on their utility bills, but also help improve the rural economy by retaining and

creating jobs.”

REAP grants are divided into two categories. The Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvement Program awards money for renewable energy developments and efficiency improvements, while the Energy Audit and Renewable Energy Development Program allows recipients to conduct energy audits and provide assistance for farms and rural businesses.

In Oregon, blueberry farm Sandau Enterprises in Salem will use a \$20,000 grant to install a 71-kilowatt solar array, offsetting 94% of the farm’s energy use and reducing energy bills by \$6,930 per year.

Another \$80,000 went to the Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative, which serves 23,000 members in Eastern Oregon including Baker, Grant, Harney and Union counties. The co-op plans to conduct energy audits and solar energy site analysis at 25 local farms and businesses.

In all, REAP grants are expected to help nearly 70 Oregon producers and business owners. Idaho grants will go toward installing solar arrays, LED lights and energy efficient windows at individual businesses. The two grants in Washington are dedicated to building solar arrays with a combined capacity of 23.7 kilowatts, saving a combined \$1,581 a year in energy costs.

Congress has appropriated \$50 million for REAP grants and loan guarantees in fiscal year 2019. USDA will announce additional awards for applicants in the coming months.

## GRANT RECIPIENTS

Farms and businesses in Oregon, Washington and Idaho received 15 grants totaling \$324,060 from USDA Rural Development to install renewable energy systems and increase energy efficiency.

## RECIPIENTS INCLUDE:

- ID — Mark E. Bolduc (Hagerman), **\$6,247**
- ID — Stephanie Elizabeth Deyo (Orofino), **\$5,047**
- ID — Azevedo Drywall LLC (Twin Falls County), **\$6,606**
- ID — City Storage Inc. (Idaho Falls), **\$6,489**
- ID — James C. Allen, DDS (Rexburg), **\$16,200**
- OR — Integrated Biomass Resources (Wallowa), **\$2,655**
- OR — Mountain View Hotel and RV Park LLC (Joseph), **\$8,077**
- OR — Sprinter Trucking Inc. (Winston), **\$19,950**
- OR — Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (Baker, Union, Grant, Harney counties), **\$80,000**
- OR — Kiger Island Blues LLC (Corvallis), **\$20,000**
- OR — Pasta Piatti Inc. (Ashland), **\$15,808**
- OR — Sandau Enterprises Inc. (Salem), **\$20,000**
- OR — University of Oregon (Eugene), **\$100,000**
- WA — Rabble and Roost LLC (Whatcom County), **\$7,759**
- WA — Fungi Perfect LLC (Shelton), **\$9,222**

**CORRECTIONS:** The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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