

SMOKE *from A1*

that as many as 100 buildings in the Blue River area were destroyed overnight on Monday.

No deaths had been confirmed as of press time on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, a smoky haze has spread across the Pacific Northwest. The Beachie Creek Fire and Lionshead Fire burning in the Santiam Canyon are among those thought to be contributing to the smoke in the Willamette Valley and beyond.

These and other wildfires throughout the state prompted Oregon Gov. Kate Brown on Tuesday to approve an emergency conflagration declaration, authorizing the Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal to mobile resources in assisting local agencies to combat the fires.

"This past weekend, we experienced significant wind that is fueling wildfires with devastating consequences across Oregon, on top of a dire pandemic," Brown said in a statement. "For people and families in the evacuation areas, please listen to local calls to evacuate as needed — these lifesaving measures can protect the lives of you and your loved ones, as well as our firefighters. In addition, I am asking all Oregonians to remain vigilant with any activity that could spark a wildfire during this historic wind event. We all need to do our part to help the many firefighters battling multiple fires across Oregon."

On Tuesday, South Lane County Fire and Rescue responded to local vegetation fires in Creswell and Dorena, though no details could be confirmed as of press time.

Also on Tuesday, all Lane Community College campuses were closed to students.

Along with declining air quality, power outages were reported in the communities of Dorena and London due in part to Monday night's wind storm.

While the Emerald People's Utility District had restored power to most customers in the London Road area by Tuesday afternoon, Lane Electric Cooperative stated it had shut down all its substations overnight as a safety precaution and has been gradually restoring power as weather conditions allow.

Staying safe

With ash falling from the sky and the distinct smell of burnt wood hanging in the air, medical professionals at PeaceHealth are warning the public to take precautions as particulates both seen and unseen can get into the airway and lungs, making it difficult to breath.

"We're all geared up to be expecting phone calls and are ready to help. And so staying in touch with your medical professional will help keep you out of danger."

—Dr. Leslie Pelinka, PeaceHealth pediatrician

"So, the recommendation would be, if at all possible, stay indoors during this terrible air quality," said Dr. Leslie Pelinka, a PeaceHealth pediatrician.

In particular, those with respiratory and breathing conditions may be at risk of exacerbating their condition if they are exposed to unhealthy air quality.

Even for those in lower risk groups, Dr. Pelinka recommended keeping time spent outside to a minimum.

Carol Hardisty, a respiratory therapist with PeaceHealth also suggested using any of the masks that have been made increasingly available during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"But make sure that you change out your mask frequently," said Hardisty. "All the ash that can get inside there can clog some things up."

Dr. Pelinka added that medical grade masks will be the most reliable in keeping out particulates while homemade

cloth masks are quite variable in their ability to do the job.

With the combination of high temperatures and air quality issues, the medical professionals also recommended staying hydrated.

"It helps with mucus clearance," said Hardisty. "With any ash or irritant that gets in the lungs, as long as you're well-hydrated, you're able to cough it up a little bit better. The drier and more dehydrated we get, it's more difficult it is to cough it up."

Aside of these precautions, individuals are also recommended to keep an eye on their own health condition.

"It's really important, if you feel yourself experiencing difficulty breathing or if it's harder to breath in any way, whether you have asthma or not, it's time to get in touch with your physician," said Dr. Pelinka. "We're all geared up to be expecting these phone calls and are ready to help. And so staying in touch with your medical professional will help keep you out of danger."

On Tuesday afternoon, the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency's air quality index reached its highest levels, listing both the Eugene/Springfield and Cottage Grove areas as hazardous.

By Wednesday morning, the index maintained a low air quality measurement as winds from the east, along with additional fire activity, continues to sweep smoke into the area.

On Monday, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) issued an air quality advisory for the Portland Metro area, Willamette Valley and Columbia River Gorge and on Tuesday updated the advisory for the Oregon Coast and South-

ern Oregon.

The advisory is expected to continue through Thursday.

"Smoke can irritate the eyes and lungs and worsen some medical conditions," the DEQ said in a news release. "Young children, adults over 65, pregnant women, and people with heart disease, asthma or other respiratory conditions are most at risk."

To stay safe, officials have generally suggested:

- Stay inside if possible. Keep windows and doors closed.
- Avoid strenuous outdoor activity.
- Be aware of smoke in your area and avoid places with the highest levels.
- Use high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters. These can be portable filters or can be installed in indoor heating, ventilation, cooling and air purification systems.
- If you have heart or lung disease or asthma, follow your healthcare provider's advice.

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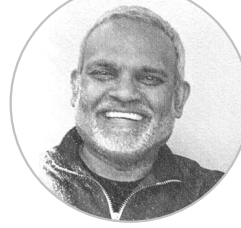


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