

Panhandle

Public Health District

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New Air Sensors covering the Northwestern Panhandle Provide Critical Coverage as New Wildfires Move Through the Region

Due to the unfortunate recent wildfires, the Northwestern Panhandle may be experiencing air quality issues ranging from unhealthy to very unhealthy. The air quality ratings are based on the Air Quality Index (AQI), which measures the concentration of pollutants such as particulate matter in the air. Local air sensors can be found at map.purpleair.com or download the Love My Air Network app on your phone to get push notifications when there is poor air quality in your community.

Due to quick action by Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Panhandle Public Health District, sensors were placed in Crawford and Chadron in reaction to recent wildfires. Residents can now see their local air quality in these communities and are encouraged to be aware of the symptoms of poor air quality they may be experiencing:

- Headaches
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Coughing
- Tightness of the chest
- Fatigue
- Aggravation of existing health conditions

Community members experiencing negative effects from smoke are encouraged to limit time outdoors and use air filtration whenever possible. The tips in this video will guide you to create a clean room in your home: <https://youtu.be/V8DqzogXcVg>.

“We are grateful for the quick action from DHHS to help us cover the gap areas in our air sensor coverage. Our goal has been to have every area of the Panhandle covered by an air quality sensor and we now have sensors in all but two Panhandle counties. If you have a location in Hyannis or Harrison where we could place a sensor please reach out!” Megan Barhafer, Community Health Planner Supervisor.



While poor air quality can make anyone sick, certain people are at greater risk for serious complications:

- Children under 18 years of age
- Adults 65 years of age or older
- Pregnant women
- People with a history of smoking
- People with current respiratory illnesses, chronic lung disease (like asthma and COPD), diabetes (type 1 and 2), heart disease, and certain other long-term health conditions
- People who are unhoused or unsheltered due to increased exposure outdoors

Steps the Public Can Take to Protect Themselves and Others

- **Stay up to date on air quality.** Local air sensors can be found at map.purpleair.com, lovemyair.com/Nebraska/home/map or download the LoveMyAir network app to get push notifications when there is poor air quality in your community
- **Know your wildfire risk.** Knowing your wildfire risk can help you to plan for a potentially poor air quality day
- **Prevent indoor pollution.** Avoid or limit the following:
 - Air fresheners, diffusing oils, candles
 - Smoking or vaping indoors
 - Broiling or frying foods
 - Using gas or propane stoves, furnaces or heaters
- **Stay with family or friends,** if your indoor air quality cannot be maintained at a safe level
- **Work with your doctor** if you are sensitive to poor air quality so you can develop a safety plan.
- **Evacuate if necessary.** Follow instructions from our local emergency management systems and evacuate if necessary.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety, and quality of life for all who live, learn, work, and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.