



• Special to the Daily Leader Favorable weather conditions may be conducive to rangeland burning in the upcoming days. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment anticipates an increase in the number of acres burned, which could result in elevated air pollution levels. If you are healthy, you are usually not at major risk from short-term exposures to smoke. Although, it still is a good idea to avoid breathing smoke if you can help it. Smoke consists of a complex mixture of gases and fine particles produced when wood and other organic matter burn.

The burns also result in ozone formation when some of the gases combine in a chemical reaction in the atmosphere. The fine particles can get into your eyes and respiratory system, where they can cause health problems such as burning eyes, runny nose and illnesses such as bronchitis. Fine particles and ozone also can aggravate chronic heart and lung diseases – and even are linked to premature deaths in people with these conditions.

Older adults and children are at highest risk for health problems especially those with underlying health conditions. Children's respiratory systems are still developing and they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults, therefore children have a greater exposure.

While a lot of people cannot eliminate exposure to smoke during the burning season, there are ways to reduce it and to reduce related health impacts. It is important for everyone to limit their exposure to smoke, especially if they fall into one of the high-risk categories. Here are some steps people can take to protect their health on days when smoke is impacting a community:

- o Healthy people should curtail or avoid strenuous outdoor exercise.
- o People with heart or breathing related illnesses should remain indoors.
- o Help keep indoor air clean by closing doors and windows and running the air conditioner on "recirculate" setting.
- o Keep airways moist by drinking lots of water.

Contact a doctor if you have symptoms such as chest pain, chest tightness, shortness of breath or severe fatigue.

More information is available at http://www.airnow.gov/index.cfm?action=topics.smoke_events.

Controlled pasture, stubble burning can produce health dangers from smoke

Friday, 09 April 2010 11:19
