# Portland’s air quality is off the charts Sunday, and parts of Oregon are just as bad due to wildfires

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**By Aimee Green**

The breathability of [Portland’s](https://www.oregonlive.com/topic/Oregon-wildfires/) air [significantly worsened](https://www.oregonlive.com/news/2020/09/portland-now-has-the-worst-air-quality-in-the-world-due-to-oregon-and-washington-wildfires.html) overnight and into Sunday, reaching 516 on the air quality index in the [hardest hit](https://www.oregonlive.com/news/2020/09/oregon-wildfires-on-sunday-blazes-in-clackamas-and-marion-counties-still-0-contained-deputies-arrest-alleged-thieves-of-generator-live-updates.html) parts of the city, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

That measurement is off the charts, which top out at 300 to 500 and categorize those numbers as “hazardous.”

The international air quality monitoring website [IQAir.com](https://www.iqair.com/us/world-air-quality-ranking) was registering a lower number of 245 for Portland overall. That number is considered“very unhealthy” for everyone. And it was still high enough to place Portland in the No. 1 position for worst air quality among major cities in the world. Measurements fluctuated by the hour and at times Sunday morning Portland was tying with Vancouver, B.C.

The West Coast is plagued by extremely smoky air, due to wildfires raging in California, Oregon and Washington. Smoke has drifted [as far off as Michigan](https://www.oregonlive.com/environment/2020/09/satellite-views-show-wildfire-smoke-from-west-coast-has-spread-all-the-way-to-michigan.html).

Residents in other parts of Oregon were suffering terribly as well. At certain points Sunday, Medford was registering at 323, Corvallis and Lincoln City at 324, Pendleton at 405, Albany at 427, Bend at 490, Eugene at 511, Salem 562 and Roseburg at 579. Vancouver was at 459.

To check the air quality in your area, visit [IQair.com](https://www.iqair.com/us/). Or visit the EPA’s air quality website, [airnow.gov](http://airnow.gov/), and type in your city or ZIP code. View interactive maps at the state’s web page, [oregonsmoke.blogspot.com](http://oregonsmoke.blogspot.com/), or the EPA’s web page, [fire.airnow.gov](http://fire.airnow.gov/).

Visibility is so poor in many areas that the Oregon Department of Transportation was urging people not to drive and to stay home if at all possible. The department advised those who are out on the roads to give plenty of space between themselves and other drivers, to use headlights or fog lights and to pull over at a safe spot if it becomes too difficult to see.

Health experts also were advising everyone to stay at home if possible, because current air conditions can have a serious effect on health. Even exercising indoors can cause [headaches](https://www.oregonlive.com/health/2020/09/the-headache-isnt-all-in-your-head-oregonians-report-symptoms-from-wildfire-smoke-exposure.html), runny noses and scratchy throats, because indoor air quality can plummet without proper filtration.

The National Weather Service announced a “dense smoke advisory” until 11 p.m. Sunday. Smoke as well as fog earlier in the day reduced visibility to as little as 50 feet.

The air quality could start improving late Monday or Tuesday, when there’s a chance of some rain, according to some forecasters. But the National Weather Service warned that the smoke might persist and the Portland area “may not see true blue skies until later in the week.”

The heavy smoke will continue to ward off hot temperatures, with highs of 70 predicted Sunday and 76 on Monday.

For the fourth day in a row, the Joint Office of Homeless Services in Portland was offering a 24-hour “smoke shelter” -- a place for individuals who are homeless to seek refuge from the unhealthy air. Shelter workers were also distributing KN95 masks, water and other supplies to people without homes.

The extra shelter space -- including at the Oregon Convention Center and the Charles Jordan Community Center -- will remain open as long as air quality is so polluted, officials said. Physical distancing measures will be followed to lessen the spread of COVID-19, officials said.

Members of the public who want to donate blankets, tarps, bottled water, sleeping bags, cloth masks and other supplies are asked to contact Celeste Duvall, outreach coordinator for the Joint Office, at celeste.duvall@multco.us or 971-940-5582.

Link to article online: <https://www.oregonlive.com/news/2020/09/portlands-air-quality-is-off-the-charts-on-sunday-and-much-of-oregon-is-just-as-bad-due-to-wildfires.html>