Smoke advisory issued for portions of Coachella Valley

Riverside County Health officials are urging residents in portions of the Coachella Valley to limit outdoor activities because of smoke and ash generated by a fire at a mulch recycling facility in Thermal.

The fire, which may burn for several more days, is sending up a column of black smoke that can be seen throughout the region. Several students at nearby schools were transported to a local hospital after complaining of respiratory issues. The debris fire is burning near the intersection of Avenue 66 and Martinez Road in the community of Thermal in the Coachella Valley. The burn area was last listed at 20 acres with no containment and is expected to burn for at least the next several days.

“Ash and smoke can make it difficult for anyone to breathe, but especially those with lung disease, young children and the elderly,” said Dr. Cameron Kaiser, Riverside County public health officer. “As we have seen, the smoke can impact many people in a short time. There are precautions the public can take to protect themselves.”

Among the precautions:
- Residents should avoid any vigorous outdoor or indoor exertion.
- Those with respiratory or heart disease, older adults, and children should remain indoors.
- Windows and doors should be closed.
- Run your air conditioner if you have one and keep the fresh air intake closed and the filter clean to prevent bringing additional smoke inside.
- Avoid using a swamp cooler or whole-house fan to prevent bringing additional smoke inside.
- To avoid worsening the health effects of smoke, don’t use indoor or outdoor wood-burning appliances, including fireplaces.

The smoke and ash advisory was issued Thursday by Kaiser for portions of the Coachella Valley. The South Coast Air Quality Management District also issued a health advisory for the area.

The fire could burn for several days, so residents can get updates on air quality by clicking on www.rivcoph.org and fire updates at www.fire.ca.gov.

South Coast AQMD Advisory updates can be found at the following link: www.aqmd.gov/advisory.