



WOOD BUFFALO ENVIRONMENTAL ASSOCIATION

Unit 3 - 805 Memorial Drive
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wbea.org

WBEA Continuously Monitors Air Quality in Fort McMurray

November 3, 2022

The Wood Buffalo Environmental Association (WBEA) continuously monitors air quality in the region and provides data to assist with monitoring major air quality events impacting Fort McMurray and surrounding areas.

Beginning Tuesday, October 18th, a wildfire burning near Morgan Heights Park in Fort McMurray's Timberlea neighbourhood caused a notable degradation of air quality, contributing to poor breathing conditions and odour events throughout the urban service area.

"The WBEA is committed to making the data we collect as widely available as possible" says WBEA Executive Director, Sanjay Prasad. "Our 24/7, year-round air quality monitoring is measured against air quality regulations and standards set by provincial and federal regulatory bodies."

Forest fires are closely tied to the release of Fine Particulate Matter smaller than 2.5 nanometres in size (referred to as PM_{2.5}) into the atmosphere. Thresholds, including objectives and guidelines, are set by the Provincial and Federal Governments for the level of specific compounds found in our air.

Between October 18th and 27th, the WBEA confirmed ten 1-hour Alberta Ambient Air Quality Guideline (AAAQG) exceedances, and two 24-hour Alberta Ambient Air Quality Objective (AAAQO) exceedances from our Patricia McInnes Air Monitoring Station (AMS). Exceedances of PM_{2.5} were also confirmed in the communities of Anzac, Janvier, and Conklin on October 19th.

The Patricia McInnes AMS—located at the Syncrude Athletic Park in Timberlea, and in proximity to the source of the event—is one of two permanent WBEA monitoring sites in Fort McMurray.

The WBEA's network of 29 continuous monitoring stations collect and report the presence of nearly a dozen pollutants that impact air quality across the Municipality.

The Air Quality Health Index (AQHI), which provides a real-time overview of current regional environmental conditions can also be found on wbea.org. An AQHI rating of 1 to 6 is considered a low to moderate health risk to the general population. A rating of 7 or above means precautions should be taken to limit exposure to the air, especially for 'at risk' individuals, including children, seniors, and those with lung conditions.

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About the WBEA:

The Wood Buffalo Environmental Association (WBEA) operates the largest air shed in the largest municipality in the country. As a scientifically independent non-profit organization, we are committed to monitoring air quality on behalf of all the people who live and work in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. We do this monitoring in a spirit of cooperation with all our members and with the best interest of the citizens of our region always in mind.

Additional Information:

In Alberta, the 2022 forest fire season officially began on March 1st and concluded on October 31st. The following table shows the total number of wildfire related AAAQO and AAAQG exceedances of PM_{2.5} at the WBEA's community air monitoring stations:

Community Air Monitoring Station	Number of AAAQO Exceedances Threshold: 29 µg/m ³ (24-hour average)	Number of AAAQG Exceedances Threshold: 80 µg/m ³ (1-hour average)
Anzac	5	8
Bertha Ganter – Fort McKay	2	2
Conklin	8	7
Fort Chipewyan	2	16
Janvier	8	29
Athabasca Valley – Fort McMurray	5	12
Patricia McInnes – Fort McMurray	5	16

For more information, please visit www.wbea.org

To view the location of all WBEA Air Monitoring Stations, including our seven community stations, please visit wbea.org/network-and-data/monitoring-stations

For information related to Ambient Air Quality Objectives and Guidelines, please visit www.alberta.ca/ambient-air-quality-objectives.aspx

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