

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EVENTS IMPACTED BY WILDFIRE SMOKE

BACKGROUND

Wildfire smoke has become a consistent factor in Canada impacting the delivery of outdoor events. The following recommendations have been developed to provide a clear decision-making process around assessing the safety of exercising outdoors when smoke is affecting air quality. The following information was developed by the Canadian Sport Institute Pacific:

GENERAL AIR QUALITY INFORMATION FOR ATHLETES TRAINING OUTDOORS

Source: <https://www.csipacific.ca/latest-news/air-quality/>

Check for Air Quality Advisories

Athletes are advised to regularly consult websites that provide check air quality measures, such as the Air Quality Index (AQHI). Examples include:

- [Government of Canada](#)
- [Government of BC](#)
- [Weather Network](#)

The above websites will help to determine the air quality that day and in the coming days and will allow some guidance on when it is safest for athletes to train outdoors. In general, early morning hours are often better for training as the air quality is better. Whenever possible, plan to exercise away from locations where air pollution levels may be higher, such as major roads and industrial worksites. When air quality is poor, exercising indoors may be an option but it is important to ensure that the air quality indoors is also good. During times of poor air quality outdoors, air quality indoors can be improved by limiting indoor sources of pollution, optimizing ventilation and using portable air cleaners fitted with HEPA filters.

This link provides advice on how to you can improve your indoor air quality: <https://ablung.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/DIY-Air-Pure-3.pdf>

Check the Air Quality Ratings

- » When the AQHI is 1-3, it is OK to exercise outdoors as planned.
- » When the AQHI is 4-6, **those with asthma may consider exercise outdoors, but only light activity**. Those without asthma may consider normal activity.
- » When the AQHI is 7-10, it is recommended that **those with asthma continue to avoid exercise outside**. Those *without* asthma may consider exercising outdoors, but typically we'd recommend light activity only.
- » When the AQHI is rated as 10+, the recommendation is that **all people** avoid exercise outside.

For all recommendations above, **it is important to self monitor for symptoms**. Sore throat, cough, eye irritation, nasal congestion and sneezing are all signs that the poor air quality is affecting you. So regardless of the AQHI number or your status as someone with asthma or not, you must still pay attention to how you are feeling and adjust your level of activity outdoors accordingly.

More Information

For more information on how to minimize the impact of air pollution on your training, please visit the Canadian Academy of Sport and Exercise Medicine Guidelines: <https://www.casem-acmse.org/news/csep-casem-statement/>

Thank you to Dr. Michael Koehle, co-author of the CASEM Guidelines, for his contribution to today's recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS SPECIFIC TO TRIATHLON EVENTS

- » If the Health Canada predicted hourly AQHI is 1, 2 or 3 the race can proceed as planned.
- » If the Health Canada predicted hourly AQHI is 4, 5 or 6 then the race can continue as planned but all participants and officials should be aware that those with health ailments affected by poor air quality (asthma, COPD, heart disease, etc.) may be more negatively impacted by these conditions and should discuss with their physician possible steps to mitigate this risk.
- » If the Health Canada predicted hourly AQHI is 7, 8, 9 or 10 then race directors should shorten the outdoor portions of the race with a goal of minimizing outdoor exposure to poor air quality to less than 60 minutes.
- » If the Health Canada predicted hourly AQHI is 10+ then the event should be delayed (if possible), until the air quality conditions improve, or cancelled (if a delay is not possible).
- » Regardless of the AQHI, if the air pollution has affected visibility such that cycling outdoors is unsafe, the cycling portion of the race should be canceled.
- » These guidelines should be included at the time of athlete registration so that there is transparency among all participants, staff and officials about the steps the event will take in the event of poor air quality on race day.

These triathlon-specific recommendations were developed by Dr. Paddy McCluskey (Chief Medical Officer, Canadian Sport Institute Pacific) in consultation with Dr. Michael Koehle (University of British Columbia Researcher and Canadian expert on air quality and exercise).