

## USING VISUAL RANGE TO ASSESS SMOKE LEVELS

Knowing how to visually assess smoke levels can help you respond to smoky conditions, because not every community has an air quality monitor stationed nearby to measure particle levels in the air. This is true even in areas that have continuous monitors, since smoke concentrations can vary widely within a couple miles and can change rapidly.

Current air quality conditions and forecast for San Luis Obispo County are available at <http://www.slocleanair.org>.

- ✓ Always pay attention to the advice of medical professionals or local health officials, and adjust activity accordingly to your particular tolerance or sensitivity to smoky conditions.

## HOW TO ASSESS VISIBLE RANGE

To estimate visibility in miles, face away from the sun and determine the limit of your visibility range by looking for targets at known distances (miles). The visible range is the point at which even high-contrast objects (e.g., a dark building or mountain viewed against the sky at noon) totally disappear.

Once you've determined visual range in miles, see below for recommendations to reduce harmful exposure to smoke.

- ✓ Remember to check on family, friends and neighbors who may need help during smoky conditions.

### Visibility Range: 11 miles or more

### Air Quality: Good

No precautions necessary.

### Visibility Range: 6 to 10 miles

### Air Quality: Moderate

No precautions necessary unless symptomatic. Unusually sensitive groups, such as people with significant heart or lung disease, should consider limiting prolonged or heavy exertion and pay attention to symptoms. Contact your health care provider right away if you have increased symptoms of lung or heart disease.

### Visibility Range: 3 to 5 miles

### Air Quality: Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups

Sensitive groups include people with heart or lung disease, the elderly, children, and pregnant women. Sensitive groups should limit prolonged or heavy physical exertion, and limit time spent outdoors. People with asthma should follow asthma management plan. If you have symptoms of lung or heart disease that may be related to excess smoke exposure, including repeated coughing, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, wheezing, chest tightness or pain, heart palpitations, nausea, unusual fatigue or lightheadedness, contact your doctor.

### Visibility Range: 1½ to 2¾ miles

### Air Quality: Unhealthy

Limit prolonged or heavy physical exertion, and limit time spent outdoors. Keep doors and windows closed, seal large gaps as much as possible, and keep the garage-to-home door closed. Avoid using exhaust fans (kitchen, bathroom, etc.). If cooling is needed, turn air conditioning to re-circulate mode in home and in car, or use fans (but do not use whole house fans that suck outdoor air into the home). Avoid indoor sources of air pollutants, such as tobacco smoke, frying or broiling foods, burning candles, vacuuming, and using paints, cleaning products and adhesives. Contact your health care provider if you have symptoms that may be related to excess smoke exposure.

People with heart or lung disease, the elderly, children, and pregnant women: Stay indoors and avoid prolonged or heavy exertion. Find out if "cleaner air" shelters have been set up in the area, or consider staying in a "clean room" at home (where there are no indoor smoke or particle sources, and possibly an air cleaner is used), or evacuate to cleaner air shelter or leave area, if safe to do so.

### Visibility Range: 1 to 1¼ miles

### Air Quality: Very Unhealthy

Avoid outdoor activities and follow the recommended precautions listed above. People with heart or lung disease, the elderly, children, and pregnant women should talk with their doctor about whether and when they should evacuate to a clean air shelter, if available, or leave the area.

### Visibility Range: Less than 1 mile

### Air Quality: Hazardous

Stay indoors and follow the precautions listed above. If symptomatic, evacuate to cleaner air shelter, if available in your area, or leave the area if safe to do so and as directed by emergency services personnel.



Air Pollution Control District  
San Luis Obispo County



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION