

Dust and Potential Health Problems

Why is dust a concern?

EPA health research tells us that dust can cause health problems. People with heart and lung disease and those with breathing problems can be impacted when inhaling dust. Even healthy people can have short term irritation when breathing dust. Dust is a nuisance, it settles on your tables, your coffee cup, your subsistence foods, and salmon drying racks.

Dust has been around for generations. Winds have been blowing dust off glaciers and dry river banks forever. We have lived with dust for thousands and thousands of years, but that doesn't make dust healthy to breathe. Now, we help throw that dust back into the air with our four wheelers, trucks and cars.

In the past three years the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) received dust complaints from over 50 communities. Is dust a problem in your village?

If you believe you have a dust issue, ADEC would like to help you find a solution to this potential health threat.

Causes of Dust

- Wind across dirt roads, runways riverbeds
- Human activities on lots without vegetation
- Quarry operations in gravel pits
- Vehicles and four wheelers on dirt roads
- Residents have told us that traffic is increasing in villages over the past 10 years, making the dust problem worse.

Sources of Dust

- Dirt roads, runways
- gravel pits, dry river beds, unvegetated land

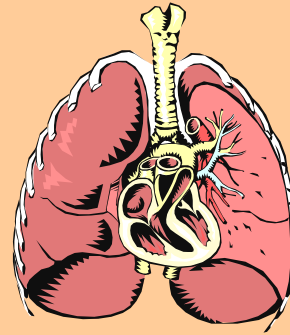
Contacts

Gerry Guay, Air Monitoring, Program Manager
gerry_guay@dec.state.ak.us
907-269-3070

Ron King, Nonpoint & Mobile Source, Program Manager
ron_king@dec.state.ak.us
907-465-5100

Health Impacts

ADEC has heard there is an increase in respiratory problems in the villages. Health studies indicate breathing problems are either somewhat worse or higher than expected in rural Alaska

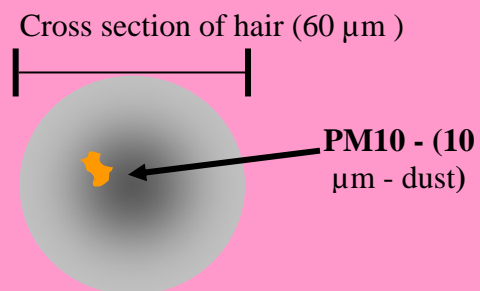


Health problems associated with dust:

- Aggravates existing heart and lung disease
 - Damages lung tissue
 - Mostly impacts children, seniors, people with asthma, people with heart conditions
- Has been shown to increase hospital/clinic visits

How does ADEC measure for dust?

ADEC has equipment that can measure for dust - particles less than 1/10 the diameter of your hair.



Dust is a very small particle that can reach the inner lung. ADEC compares their measurements to the following EPA standards for dust:

- 24 hours – 150 micrograms per cubic meter
- Annual – 50 micrograms per cubic meter