

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Dense Smoke Causes Health and Safety Concerns

SUFFOLK, VA (August 18, 2011) – Due to dense smoke from a wildfire burning in the Great Dismal Swamp, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality has issued an air quality alert for Isle of Wight County and the City of Suffolk. The code red air quality alert will remain in effect until 8 p.m. tonight.

An air quality alert means that fine particulate concentrations within the region may approach or exceed unhealthy standards. Everyone is advised to avoid prolonged or heavy outdoor exertion. Those with respiratory and/or heart ailments may experience more serious health effects.

Heavy smoke is also cause for concern on roadways. Based on smoke dispersion modeling, and east to southeast flow, the area's most likely to be impacted will be to the West and Northwest of the fire area, including Highway 32, US Highway 13 and adjacent secondary routes from the Virginia/North Carolina line north to the city of Suffolk. Effects may also extend as far west as Highway 58. Visibility on Highway 32 south of Suffolk will remain less than a quarter mile to near zero at times through 10 a.m. Visibility at the James River Bridge and Monitor Merrimac Bridge Tunnel is reported at less than half a mile, with visibilities under a quarter mile in some spots. Motorists are advised to drive slowly and use caution in these areas.

For additional information, please visit the Virginia DEQ air quality website at <http://www.deq.virginia.gov/airquality>

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