



# Kamloops Physicians for a Healthy Environment Society

*Our Mission: Kamloops Physicians for a Healthy Environment is dedicated to protecting the health and well-being of the citizens of Kamloops by promoting health education and science-based interventions that result in maintaining and improving the environment.*

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## KPHES Media Release

**From:** Kamloops Physicians for a Healthy Environment Society (KPHES)

**KPHES:** KPHES is a registered society in British Columbia. It is composed of medical doctors, allied health professionals, scientists, and Thompson Rivers University professors.

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**Products:** The current and all past studies have been loaded onto the website: [www.kphe.ca](http://www.kphe.ca) under “Resources” and “Media Releases and Reports”

### How the July and August 2017 Wildfire Smoke Events Affected Health and Quality of Life in Kamloops, BC

This report examines the results of an online survey of the general population in Kamloops BC during the period from August 7 to September 4, 2017. In the interval from early July to early September, British Columbia had the most hectares of forest ever burned in recorded history and Kamloops experienced the highest PM<sub>2.5</sub> (fine particulate concentrations) for the months of July and August since records began in 1998. This occurred despite the major forest fires being 60 km or more from Kamloops. A survey was undertaken to examine in broad terms the subjective symptoms the public was experiencing. Several conclusions were reached based on survey results and a review of relevant literature.

The wildfire smoke of July and August 2017 significantly impacted health and healthy lifestyles of people in Kamloops and region. The air quality during these unprecedented wildfires had direct physical, psychological, social, and economic impacts on citizens.

The literature reviewed in the past 10 years revealed the survey results were consistent with published observations of symptoms and impacts of wildfire smoke on a population.

In the report, Health Authorities were encouraged to develop a system of monitoring the health of the population in BC for both short-term and long-term health impacts of the wildfire smoke. It was suggested the Ministry of Health partner with the Ministry of the Environment to develop alerts with a timescale suitable to describe short-term fluctuations in the smoke produced by wildfires and which utilize all relevant measurements available in a community such as Kamloops.

During extreme smoke events such as in the summer of 2017, suggestions to the Province included supplying facemasks of the proper quality to adequately filter out the fine particles produced by wildfires. Filters for furnace-fans and other prevention equipment may require pre-planning as demand may outstrip supply. In the most extreme of circumstances, a disaster response plan should include industrial sized filters installed in strategic public buildings that can act as air-shelters for those who do not have homes with air-conditioners or furnace fans. It was suggested the Province should develop guidelines for those who work outside, and to enforce protection measures or work-cessation legislation for employers. Disaster planning should include designation of essential services and a protection plan for those workers who are required to fill these essential services.