



Air Quality Briefing Note

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Issued by: Barb Oke

Agency: Northern Health

Questions

What have you done in the last 12 months?

- NH has dedicated an additional 0.5 FTE for 1 year to support and strengthen NH's air quality program across the region.
- NH continued its internal air quality education and awareness efforts through our air quality brochures and air quality health promotion slides for rotational use on screens at the hospitals (including two different air quality messages at UHNBC). We also provide air quality awareness information on our website;
- NH continued to work in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and other partners to issue and communicate air quality advisories/notices and respond to associated media and public follow-ups, including the new Smoky Skies Notices;
- NH's internal Air Quality Steering Committee has been providing internal leadership and support on indoor and outdoor air quality issues in Northern Health. This group has also connected with Ministry of Environment's northern air quality meteorologist to better identify concerns, issues and solutions across the region;
- NH continued to participate in the Health Authority Air Quality Council to exchange information and expertise across provincial health authorities and health agencies;
- NH continued to support the Ministry of Environment on complex air discharge permits and/or permit applications across the region;
- NH continued to respond to and follow-up on public inquiries and concerns related to indoor and outdoor air quality across the region;
- NH participates as a working group member on Environmental Assessments across the region. Over the past 12 months, this has included the review of the Application and Human Health Risk Assessment for the Giscome Quarry (located near Prince George);
- NH continued to incorporate fuel mileage as an important purchasing decision for Northern Health fleet vehicles, requiring departments to write a business case for any vehicles other than a fuel efficient compact sedan;
- NH continued to be involved in radon education events and continue to sell radon test kits at our office;
- NH continued to provide comments on municipal and regional land referrals across the region; incorporating comments on air quality when appropriate.

Does the action address a goal and/or strategy from the Phase III Plan?

Yes, it addresses the following strategies from the Phase 3 Plan:

- “Through research and education, increase public understanding of air quality issues, advisories, potential solutions and success stories”
- “collaborate with PGAIR member organizations to develop policies that reduce air quality impacts from new or expanding industries”
- “Reduce emissions from wood burning heating systems and backyard recreation fires by encouraging woodstove upgrades..., increasing knowledge of proper burn practices and increasing awareness of the City’s Clean Air Bylaw”
- Reduce dust and vehicle emissions through education and awareness
- “Encourage continuous improvement and use of “best available technology” for current, expanding and new permitted industry.”
- “Encourage the use of best available technology and best practices to reduce emissions”
- “reduce incidences of illegal burning”
- “encourage clean-burning practices for backyard recreational fires”
- “Reduce emissions from space heating”
- “Improve awareness of air quality issues and potential solutions”

What are you planning to do in the next 12 months?

Over the next 12 months and with the help of the additional temporary air quality position, NH will be working to build and strategically improve NH’s air quality program. Efforts will be taken to increase the resources that will be available to front line staff and to explore opportunities for incorporating air quality into existing programs. These efforts would be in addition to the ongoing air quality efforts (as noted above) that NH carries out. We would strive to support the same goals/strategies as we have in previous years (please see above)

What is your long-term plan to meet the 2016 goal?

Northern Health’s goal over the long-term is to continue educating and bringing awareness to the public on air quality and radon issues to encourage behavior change and action. We plan on doing this by continuing to identify opportunities within our own and partner organizations. We will also continue to work with regulatory agencies and decision makers to strive to incorporate health consideration into policy and land-use decisions. As above, it is our long-term to strive to support the same goals/strategies as we have in previous years.

Please indicate your self-assessed progress during the past 12 months:

Low

Medium

High