



Air Quality Briefing Note

Date: September, 2017

Issued by: Paula Tait, Health & Resource Development Technical Advisor

Agency: Northern Health

2016 Phase III PM_{2.5} Goal

- A 40% reduction from all significant sources;
- A daily average not to exceed 25 micrograms per cubic meter of air; and
- An annual average of 5 micrograms per cubic meter of air.

What have you done in the last 12 months?

- Northern Health made the 0.5 FTE air quality position a permanent position in the Office of Health and Resource Development. This position will be a regional position that will support air quality efforts across the Northern Health region;
- Northern Health is developing a regional air quality status and guidance document that will provide regional strategic direction in outdoor air quality. Information has been collected and is being organized for this document;
- Northern Health continued air quality education and awareness efforts and has placed some focus on sharing education materials on the Northern Health social media pages, the Northern Health Matters Blog, the Healthier You publication, and media spots;
- Northern Health continued to work in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and other partners to issue and communicate air quality advisories/bulletins and respond to associated media and public follow-ups, including the new Smoky Skies Bulletins;
- Northern Health extended support to existing air quality roundtables within the region and has communicated intentions of supporting communities who are looking to start the airshed management plan process;
- Northern Health's internal Air Quality Steering Committee continued providing internal leadership and support on indoor and outdoor air quality issues in Northern Health. MoE Air Quality Meteorologists also participate with this group;
- Northern Health continued to participate in the Health Authority Air Quality Council, now referred to as the Provincial Air Quality Liaison Group, to exchange information and expertise across provincial health authorities and health agencies;
- Northern Health continued to respond to and follow-up on public and media inquiries and concerns related to indoor and outdoor air quality across the region. We have collaborated with outside agencies when possible (such as MoE and PGAIR);

- Northern Health participates as a working group member on Environmental Assessments across the region, including the Giscome Quarry (located near Prince George);
- Public Health connected with the Northern Health Facilities department to explore opportunities to manage for air quality impacts;
- Northern Health made improvements in the process for providing comments on updates to Official Community Plans across the region. Over the past 12 months, this has included the reviews of the Burns Lake, Thornhill and Granisle OCPs – with air quality messages incorporated in our comments;
- The HRDTA (Air) position participated in many professional development activities related to air quality; most notably, the Smoke Forum in Kelowna (October 2016), the BC Lung Air Quality and Health Workshop (March 2017), and many webinars throughout the year. It is our goal to share the learnings of these events with local airshed management groups and apply these learnings across our region;
- Northern Health, in collaboration with local partners, organized a regional ‘Responsible Wood Burning Campaign’ that featured a collection of content related to responsible wood burning from web resources and from partnering organizations like PGAIR. The campaign included Northern Health social media posts, a social media contest, advertising in various venues and the development of posters, pamphlets and a new Northern Health wood burning web page. It is our intention to use and build upon the content/material that was developed in subsequent years;
- The summer of 2017 has had an unprecedented wildfire season. Northern Health participated in many aspects of the response. In terms of air quality, Northern Health prioritized coordinating the collection of relevant information from the Ministry of Environment, the BCCDC and other web resources and shared the information out routinely. Northern Health participated with the Provincial Health Sector Wildfire Smoke Coordination and Response group and the Northern Health Public Health Wildfire Planning Group. A blog post regarding how to protect yourself from wildfire smoke was released towards the beginning of the season (accompanied by social media posts) and another informational document was completed to aid organizations determining whether or not to cancel or postpone outdoor events.

Does the action address a goal and/or strategy from the Phase III Plan? If yes, please list the goal and/or strategy.

Yes, these are the following goals and strategies addressed (PGAIR’s Strategic Plan 2016-2021):

- Support a core group of agencies that meets and communicates regularly on air quality initiatives, emerging issues, and solutions;
- Promote a community that is well informed of air quality challenges, actions, and progress;
- Continue to support the regional Woodstove Exchange Program to bring the total particulate matter reduction to 35 tonnes/year;
- Support the development or enhancement of air quality roundtables/groups in other BC communities, using lessons learned from PGAIR;
- Provide a forum for inter-agency communication and collaboration on addressing air quality;

- Communicate air quality needs and potential solutions to key agencies and individuals in the community, who may or may not be Members of PGAIR;
- Increase public awareness of air quality through media, social media, events, and presentations;
- Implement educational strategies to support wood smoke reduction;
- Meet and strategize with other interior communities facing similar air quality challenges.

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

Over the next 12 months and with the help of the additional air quality position, Northern Health will be building momentum on the tasks undertaken and listed above and, additionally, strategically improve and articulate Northern Health’s air quality program (AQ status and guidance document, communications and strategic plans). Again, 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. We would strive to support the same goals/strategies as we have in previous years (please see above).

Some specific tasks that we are hoping to accomplish over the next 12 months are as follows:

- Debrief after the wildfire smoke season and build a library of resources and best practices for subsequent years;
- Build on the wood burning campaign and disseminate printed resources;
- Develop more robust road dust key messaging and develop a strategy for sharing out the information prior to the spring season;
- Improve the Northern Health air quality web page and continue building our web and printed resource library;
- Finalize the internal Air Quality Status and Guidance document while developing a strategic plan and communications plan.

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 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 goal 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

High