



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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For Immediate Release: March 20, 2008

08-34

DOH URGES BIG ISLAND RESIDENTS TO TAKE PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES FOR ELEVATED SULFUR DIOXIDE LEVELS

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) is urging Hawai'i County residents to take precautionary measures due to elevated levels of sulfur dioxide (SO₂). The 24-hour SO₂ level recorded at the DOH air monitoring station located in Pahala exceeded the federal ambient air quality standard on Wednesday, March 19. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's standard for SO₂ averaged over 24-hours is 0.14 parts per million (ppm). The DOH Pahala air monitoring station recorded a 24-hour average of 0.149 ppm.

Communities near the Kilauea volcano are particularly affected by increased levels of SO₂ caused by the recent volcanic activity. The DOH is continuing to monitor the SO₂ levels in five Hawai'i County communities: Kona, Hilo, Mountain View, Pahala, and Pahoā.

Elevated levels of SO₂ can cause breathing problems in individuals especially those with pre-existing respiratory conditions, such as asthma, emphysema, and bronchitis. If you have respiratory conditions and live or work in an area impacted by SO₂ or vog, consider taking precautionary measures. The following are general recommendations from the American Lung Association:

- Stay indoors and use an air conditioner, if available.
- Do not smoke and avoid second-hand smoke.
- Limit physical exertion.

DOH Urges Big Island Residents to Take Precautionary Measures
For Elevated Sulfur Dioxide Levels

- Drink plenty of fluids to loosen mucus. Warm beverages seem to work best.
- If you take medications, make sure you have an adequate supply and keep them readily available in a convenient place.
- Contact your physician as soon as any respiratory problem develops.

While these recommendations are intended primarily for persons having respiratory or chronic lung disease, they are also useful for healthy persons during vog episodes.

To obtain additional information on respiratory health, contact your personal physician or the American Lung Association of Hawai'i at (808) 537-5966.

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