



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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**STATE ANNOUNCES NEW WEBSITE FOR CURRENT
SULFUR DIOXIDE LEVELS ON HAWAI'I ISLAND**

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) today launched a new website where the public can obtain up-to-date information on sulfur dioxide levels in areas of the Island of Hawai'i impacted by vog and volcanic emissions. The public is encouraged to use the website <http://www.hiso2index.info> to access sulfur dioxide levels in the Pahala, Hilo, Mountain View, Puna, and Kona areas and in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park.

Sulfur dioxide (SO₂) is an irritant gas emitted by the Kilauea volcano. In recent months, temporary increased levels (spikes) have been observed in the Districts of Ka'u and Puna. People with asthma or other chronic lung conditions who are physically active outdoors during these temporary spikes in SO₂ are most likely to experience the irritant health effects of sulfur dioxide.

DOH collaborated with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the County of Hawai'i, National Park Service, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center to develop a color-coded system to make it easier for people to understand quickly whether sulfur dioxide is reaching unhealthy levels in their communities. Six colors cover current sulfur dioxide levels. These sulfur dioxide levels are measured by DOH air monitors and are based on 15-minute averages. The six colors correspond to a different level of health concern ranging from "good" to "hazardous". The color-coded system will replace the existing system currently used by the County of Hawai'i.

(more)

“The new website displaying current color-coded sulfur dioxide monitoring levels will help people learn how sulfur dioxide may affect them and how they can protect their health,” said Laurence Lau, Deputy Director for Environmental Health.

Because people may be affected differently, the DOH recommends that people rely upon how they personally respond to sulfur dioxide rather than depending only on the ambient air monitors to make health decisions. The sulfur dioxide effect on communities varies widely depending largely on the wind and weather conditions. Accordingly, the stationary air monitors may not be representative of sulfur dioxide levels in a specific community. In addition, the DOH warns that the personal hand-held sulfur dioxide monitors may not give the same measurements as the DOH monitors due to differences in the instrument sensitivity, especially at lower concentrations of SO₂.

In addition to using the new DOH website, for up-to-date information on vog and volcanic emissions, the public should call the VOG Helpline at the toll-free number **1-(866) 767-5044**. Additional information on vog can be found at <http://hawaii.gov/gov/vog>.

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