

Panhandle

Public Health District

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For immediate release

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Panhandle Public Health District partners with communities to expand access to air quality information

Panhandle Public Health District (PPHD) has been partnering with communities to increase access to local air quality data. By visiting map.purpleair.com you can see all the communities in the Panhandle who have sensors. Determining air quality is as simple as noticing the color of the dot over your community and the

number associated. The higher the number and the closer to dark red the worse the air quality.

Our local air quality can affect our daily lives. And it can change from day to day, season to season, and can even vary depending on the time of day. In Western Nebraska, wildfire smoke, pollen, dust, and agricultural elements are the largest contributors to changes in our air quality. Communities with an air quality sensor include: Gordon, Hemingford, Alliance, Scottsbluff, Gering, Minatare, Bridgeport, Harrisburg, Gurley, Potter, Chadron, Oshkosh and Sidney. If you would like an air sensor in your community, please reach out to PPHD.

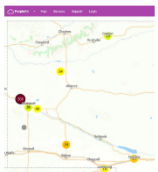
The Air Quality Index (AQI) provides information about the health effects of common air pollutants, and how to avoid those effects. The flags alert people to that particular day's air quality, so they know when to modify their outdoor activities, like exercising for less time or moving exercise indoors when necessary.

Using Air Quality Monitoring Tools

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Public Health District

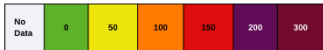
Several tools make it easy to look at the current air quality in your area or to predict poor air quality days due to wildfires.

Purple Air Monitor Map



Go to map.purpleair.com. You will see a map that looks like this. The dots each represent a community that has an active monitor and have the air quality score in them.

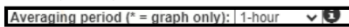
There is a guide along the bottom of the screen that looks like this:



If you want to edit any of the settings you can do so by clicking the bar along the top:



Most settings don't need to be changed. The most helpful settings are the averaging period and the option to choose accessible colors. The monitors measure the air quality many times every minute and this setting lets you choose what average air quality score you want the map to show. It automatically sets to 10 minutes but an average over the hour may give you a better idea of your exposure.



Check current air quality at map.purpleair.com and get wildfire forecasts at <https://nebraskawildfirerisk.com>

How the Color Scale Works

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Green | Safe for all activities or Healthy (0-49) |
| Yellow | Take precautions or Moderate (50-99) |
| Orange | Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (100-149) |
| Red | Unhealthy for Everyone (150-199) |
| Purple | Very Unhealthy for Everyone (200-299) |
| Dark Purple | Hazardous for Everyone (300 and higher) |

Why Purple Air Monitors?

Purple air monitors automatically report using the internet so we have constant information about our air quality. They are the most accessible monitors. This allowed us to partner with local schools to get monitors in more communities.



| Activity Duration | Good | Moderate | Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (101-150) | Unhealthy, Very Unhealthy, or Hazardous (>150) |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| 15 minutes to 1 hour (recess, PE, classes held outside, etc.) | A great day to be outside and active! | People with health conditions should consider opting out. Limit intensity of activities. | Everyone should limit their activity to moderate intensity outside. For people with health conditions, further limit intensity or another location with better air quality. | Cancel outdoor activity or move to an area with safer air quality, (indoors with filtered air or a different location). Limit to light intensity activities indoors if indoor PM2.5 levels are elevated. |
| 1-4 hours (athletic events, practices, etc.) | A great day to be outside and active! | People with health conditions should consider opting out. Limit intensity of activities. | Limit to light intensity activities or 1-hour total duration with moderate intensity activities. If intensity level and time can't be changed, consider canceling outdoor activity or moving to an area with safer air quality, (indoors or a different location). For those with health conditions, further limit time or intensity if needed. | Cancel outdoor activity or move to an area with safer air quality, either indoors with filtered air or to a different location. Limit to light intensity activities indoors if indoor PM2.5 levels are elevated. |
| >4 hours (farming, day hike, overnight camp, etc.) | A great day to be outside and active! | People with health conditions should go to an area with safer air quality. Everyone should limit intensity of the activities | Limit to light intensity activities and under 4-hr total duration. If intensity level and time can't be modified, cancel outdoor activity, or move to an area with safer air quality (indoors or to a different location). For those with health conditions, further limit time or intensity if needed. | Cancel outdoor activity or move to an area with safer air quality, either indoors with filtered air or to a different location. Limit to light intensity activities indoors if indoor PM2.5 levels are elevated. |

A quick guide to activity levels based on air quality:

- **Green:** A great day to be outside
- **Yellow:** A fine day to be outside
- **Orange:** Unhealthy for those who are sensitive, like children or older adults, or have lung or heart health challenges. Those who are not sensitive may still notice effects and should limit outdoor activity intensity
- **Red – Dark Red/Purple:** Cancel outdoor activities and limit any necessary outdoor activity to light intensity with frequent breaks. Consider spending the day inside with air filtration if possible.

For more information about educational opportunities for schools or communities on air quality, reach out to Megan Barhafer at mbarhafer@pphd.ne.gov or 308-765-1939.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle community.