

FAQ's for Air Quality

Fresno State monitors the Air Quality Index on the Environmental Protection Agency's AirNow.gov website.

We understand the importance of this issue as sensitivity varies among individuals. Given that we live in a region where the AQI is often in the mid to high 100s at various times throughout the year, we strive to balance health considerations with the importance of continuity of our academic endeavors and campus operations.

Please review the information and resources about air quality shown below.

1. When air quality is poor, is it safe to travel to and from classes?

Yes, while individual health and sensitivities may vary, traveling to and from classes is generally safe. The EPA's [Air Quality Guide for Particle Pollution](#) provides activity recommendations that correspond to the various air quality levels. For example, when the Air Quality Index (AQI) is over 150, and in the "Unhealthy" range (151-200), the guide states that sensitive groups (people with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children under the age of 14 should "avoid prolonged or heavy exertion." Everyone else should "reduce prolonged or heavy exertion."

2. What website does the University use to monitor the air quality?

The EPA's [AirNow.gov](#) webpage.

3. How do I find information about air quality at Fresno State or where I live?

Go to the EPA's [AirNow.gov](#) page and type in the ZIP code for the area of concern. Fresno State's ZIP code is 93740.

4. How can I find more information about the EPA's air quality advisory information (including but not limited to activity level recommendations for each air quality level or index)?

The EPA's Air Quality Guide for Particle Pollution can be viewed [here](#). Additional information about the AQI and individual pollutants can be found [here](#).

5. What is the difference between RAAN and AirNow?

RAAN (Real Time Air Advisory Network) is an air quality advisory system that collects raw pollutant level data from multiple air monitoring stations managed by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

There are 10 stations in Fresno County; one of which is in Clovis, within two miles of the campus. Each station detects and collects pollution level data for three pollutants of concern:

- PM 10 (Particulate matter between 2.5 and 10 micrometers in size) are larger, coarse particles that come from sources such as crushing and grinding operations, road dust and some agricultural operations. PM 10 will primarily collect or deposit in your upper

respiratory mucous membranes (nose/throat). *Note: Only three stations in Fresno County detect/collect PM 10 data.*

- PM 2.5 (Particulate matter 2.5 micrometers in size and smaller) are small, fine particles that come from sources such as vehicle emissions, industrial processes, wood stoves and wildfires. PM 2.5 particles are more capable of reaching deep lung tissue, and therefore, are considered potentially more harmful.
- Ozone (harmful gas that is usually a problem in Fresno during summer months).

RAAN has an air quality advisory charting system called ROAR (Real Time Outdoor Activity Risk) that is primarily used by K-12 schools. It is based purely on ozone and PM 2.5 levels.

[AirNow](#) is an advisory system that is managed by the EPA. However, AirNow tracks and reports/maps the AQI (Air Quality Index), which is a calculated number using the raw pollutant level data detected/collected by the same air monitoring stations that feed into RAAN. AirNow.gov tracks the AQI of the three pollutants of concern. The pollutant with the highest AQI value is what is ultimately reported/mapped by AirNow.gov.

6. Are student-athletes required to attend practices and/or compete when the air quality is bad?

The University follows NCAA and Mountain West Compliance guidelines. Student-athletes are advised to check with their coach or athletic trainer for additional guidance.

7. If students are having health issues related to air quality, where do they go?

The [Student Health and Counseling Center](#) has resources available for students.

8. What symptoms might I experience from air pollution and when should I see a doctor?

Depending on the health of each person, one may experience one or more of the following symptoms when exposed to prolonged poor air quality: irritation of eyes, nose and throat; coughing; shortness of breath; and increased susceptibility to respiratory infections.

9. What populations are considered groups sensitive to air pollution?

Susceptible populations include those with heart and lung diseases, pregnant women, outdoor workers, older adults, and the elderly and children under the age of 14.

10. What if I must miss classes due to a health concern related to poor air quality?

Students with health concerns are encouraged to provide their instructors relevant documentation for medical absences and arrange for makeup work if needed, as governed by APM 232. [Link to Academic Policy Manual \(APM\)](#)

11. Should masks be worn, and will the University make them available?

If an individual is having health issues that are suspected to be caused by air quality, they should consult with their physician prior to purchasing and wearing a particle-filtering mask (N95 respirator), and limit the amount of outdoor activity. The University does not provide N95 respirators to students, or to employees who are not required to work outdoors.

Caution/warning statements for N95 Respirator Mask:

- An N95 respirator can make it more difficult for the wearer to breathe due to carbon dioxide build up, which reduces the intake of oxygen, and increases breathing and heart rates.
- People with chronic respiratory, cardiac, or other medical conditions that make breathing difficult should check with their healthcare provider before using an N95 respirator.
- To work as expected, an N95 respirator requires a proper fit to your face.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not generally recommend facemasks and respirators for use in home or community settings.

12. When would classes be canceled due to poor air quality?

Unless the AQI remains at “Very Unhealthy” levels (201-300) for a significant number of consecutive hours, we expect our campus to remain open. We will communicate about any schedule changes for outdoor classes and activities and/or curtailment of any campus operations. To learn more about the AQI’s six health categories, please click [here](#).

Additional Resources

- Link to information and resources related to fire/smoke conditions that impact air quality: <http://californiasmokeinfo.blogspot.com/>

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