



Media Advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Unhealthy air quality recorded in Chicago as result of Minnesota wildfires,
Illinois EPA calls Air Pollution Action Day
*** Interview Opportunity *****

WHAT: Already today, the Chicago area has already recorded ORANGE air quality levels, which are deemed unhealthy for sensitive groups including children, the elderly and people with lung diseases. Illinois EPA has called an air pollution action day to alert the public to reduce their polluting activities today.

WHY: Minnesota's wildfire has caused excess fine particulate matter (soot) to blow into the Chicago area. The smoke has combined with Chicago's already unhealthy levels of soot and ozone (smog) to create unhealthy air quality levels for the greater Chicago area.

Illinois EPA has asked the public to reduce their polluting activities such as idling cars and mowing the lawn, and is encouraging the use of public transportation to reduce the number of pollutants in the air. People are advised to reduce outdoor activity and to stay indoors in an air-conditioned area with windows and doors closed.

The entire Chicago area is designated as not meeting federal health standards for ozone set in 1997. The U.S. EPA standard is due to be updated, but President Obama announced earlier this month that he is not allowing U.S. EPA to tighten their ozone health standard until at least 2013. The EPA had proposed to fix the current flawed and inadequate health standard from 2008 that Administrator Lisa Jackson called, "not legally defensible" as recently as July 2011. Local health and environmental advocates continue to call for an update to the standard, as there is overwhelming medical evidence that stricter protections are needed, and waiting at least two more years will cost lives.

WHO: **Brian Urbaszewski – Director Environmental Health Programs**
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Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago has been a local public health leader since 1906. Today, the association addresses asthma, COPD, lung cancer, tobacco control and air quality with a comprehensive approach involving research, education and advocacy activities. For more information, visit www.lungchicago.org.