

Chinese city cancels flights in 2nd day of smog alert

December 18 2016



Electric bike riders wearing mask to protect themselves from exhaust gas wait at a traffic lights junction during a heavily polluted day in Beijing, Sunday, Dec. 18, 2016. China's capital and other northern cities have banned half of all vehicles from city streets and ordered factories, schools and construction sites closed in response to a five-day smog red alert. (AP Photo/Andy Wong)

A smog-shrouded Chinese city canceled airline flights Sunday due to poor visibility and parents took children to hospitals on the second day

of a pollution alert across the country's north.

The official Xinhua News Agency said 35 flights in Tianjin, east of Beijing, were delayed or canceled. Highways into the city of 7.5 million people were closed "due to extremely low visibility."

Beijing and 22 other Chinese cities imposed emergency measures Saturday, including ordering cars off the road and telling factories and schools to close, after pollution soared to more than 10 times safe levels.

On Sunday, news website said the number of children being taken to Beijing hospitals with breathing trouble soared. Photos showed waiting rooms crowded with parents carrying children who wore face masks.

Chinese cities are notorious for noxious air blamed on emissions from older cars and trucks, [coal-fired power plants](#) and factories.

Members of the public closely watch levels of PM2.5, particles measuring 2.5 microns across that are easily inhaled and damage lung tissue.

The alert, this winter's first, lasts through Wednesday. The National Meteorological Center said pollution in a densely populated swath stretching from the country's northeast across Beijing to eastern China was likely to worsen on Monday.



A security guard wears a mask during duty in Beijing, China, Saturday, Dec. 17, 2016. China's capital and other northern cities have banned half of all vehicles from city streets and ordered factories, schools and construction sites closed in response to a five-day smog red alert. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

Visibility in some areas was as little as 1,000 meters (3,280 feet), according to the weather agency.

Authorities in Jinan, south of Tianjin, raised that city's alert to the second-highest level Sunday after the city "basically disappeared" in the haze, the newspaper Jilu Evening News reported. Photos on its website showed downtown office towers as ghostly silhouettes at midday.

Beijing and other cities have tried to improve air quality by switching power plants from coal to natural gas and rolling out fleets of electric buses and taxis.

The Beijing city weather bureau says that despite the latest spike, air in the Chinese capital has improved. It says days on which was it was rated good in the first half of the year increased by 19 to 107, while the number of heavily polluted days fell by two to 14.



A woman adjusts her mask before walking outdoors in Beijing, China, Saturday, Dec. 17, 2016. China's capital and other northern cities have banned half of all vehicles from city streets and ordered factories, schools and construction sites closed in response to a five-day smog red alert. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

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