

Bangkok schools closed over air pollution concerns

January 30 2019, by Kawewit Kaewjinda



A young boy wears a protective mask for the high levels of air pollution as he's picked up from school in Bangkok, Thailand, Wednesday, Jan. 30, 2019. Over 400 schools in Bangkok have been ordered shut Wednesday as the Thai capital sees continuously high levels of air pollution and dust particles. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)

More than 400 schools in Thailand's capital, Bangkok, were shut for the rest of the week Wednesday due to increasing concern over dangerously

unhealthy air pollution.

Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha directed Bangkok's governor to order the closure of 437 schools after officials said the [pollution](#) would continue until next Monday. They said still air and [heavy traffic](#) are causing a buildup of particles in the air.

The Pollution Control Department said the amount of particularly dangerous tiny "PM 2.5" particles has risen in all areas in and around Bangkok since Monday.

"We decided to eliminate the problem by closing down the schools," said Police Col. Asawin Kwanmuang, the city's governor. "We're afraid that it can be dangerous for the children." Technical colleges are included among the closed institutions but universities are still considering what to do.

The Public Health Ministry said people should refrain from [outdoor activities](#) and exercise, and look instead for indoor venues. Many commuters and pedestrians have begun wearing face masks.

Pollution levels also rose elsewhere in Thailand as well, bringing a heavy haze to Chiang Mai and other northern areas well ahead of the annual "smoky season" that normally begins in late February when farmers burn agricultural waste and dry weather allows airborne particles to accumulate.



Bangkok's cityscape is covered in thick smog Wednesday, Jan. 30, 2019. More than 400 schools in Thailand's capital, Bangkok, have been shut as several weeks of dangerously unhealthy air pollution causes increasing concern. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)

Efforts to reduce the pollution level in Bangkok by hosing down roads and spraying water in the air have been criticized as ineffective. People were asked to limit open-air burning of materials, and have even been advised to use shorter incense sticks in upcoming Lunar New Year celebrations.

Governor Asawin said he would consider declaring parts of Bangkok "pollution control zones" if they exceed safe levels for three straight days.

That could include control of diesel-engine exhausts, outdoor burning and construction activities, and possible road closings and diversions.



A child leaves school wearing his protective face mask due in the high levels of air pollution in Bangkok, Thailand, Wednesday, Jan. 30, 2019. More than 400 schools in Thailand's capital, Bangkok, have been shut as several weeks of dangerously unhealthy air pollution causes increasing concern. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)



Wearing protective masks due to the high levels of city air pollution, parents pick up their children from school in Bangkok, Thailand, Wednesday, Jan. 30, 2019. Over 400 schools in Bangkok have been ordered shut Wednesday as the Thai capital sees continuously high levels of air pollution and dust particles. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)



A parent and child wear protective masks for the high levels of air pollution as they leave the school in Bangkok, Thailand, Wednesday, Jan. 30, 2019. Over 400 schools in Bangkok have been ordered shut Wednesday as the Thai capital sees continuously high levels of air pollution and dust particles. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)



A man wears a protective mask as he walks in the high levels of air pollution in Bangkok, Thailand, Wednesday, Jan. 30, 2019. The Pollution Control Department said in a Wednesday morning report that all areas in Bangkok and its vicinities are seeing an increased amount of the benchmark PM 2.5, tiny dust particles, in the air since Monday. It said still air and heavy traffic is causing the dust build-up in the air and such conditions are expected to last until Feb 4. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)



Wearing protective masks due to the high levels of air pollution, parents pick up their children from school in Bangkok, Thailand, Wednesday, Jan. 30, 2019. More than 400 schools in Thailand's capital, Bangkok, have been shut as several weeks of dangerously unhealthy air pollution causes increasing concern. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)

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