

# Macedonia imposes urgent measures due to severe pollution

January 27 2020

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North Macedonia's government on Monday said it was imposing urgent measures in the country's capital, Skopje, and the western city of Tetovo in order to protect people from severely high levels of air pollution.

Authorities said the levels of toxic particles in the air were about 11 times higher than the safe levels on two consecutive days, creating a [health hazard](#).

The government has recommended companies allow pregnant women and persons over the age of 60 to not work, for construction companies to reduce outdoor work and for sport and other outdoor activities to be banned on days of high pollution.

The government said it would reduce the use of its official vehicles by half, and ordered the health and welfare ministries to provide shelter for [homeless people](#) and to increase [emergency services](#) and [home visits](#) to people with [chronic illnesses](#).

The measures will take effect from Tuesday.

North Macedonia has been one of Europe's most polluted countries for years. Health authorities estimate that more than 3,000 people die each year as result of air pollution, which is mostly a result of the heavy use of household wood-burning stoves during cold winters, an old fleet of cars and the practice in some areas of garbage disposal by incineration.

Dozens of environmental groups have held protests in recent weeks demanding government action to reduce heavy air pollution. The country's president, Stevo Pendarovski, warned in his annual address before lawmakers last month that air pollution "seriously undermines our nation's potential."

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