

Winds not strong enough to push smoke away; Michigan air quality alerts continue

July 3 2023, by Jakkar Aimery



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Although clouds of smoke appear to be lifting compared to levels seen earlier this week, the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy has continued its statewide air quality alert for particulate matter pollution through midnight Sunday.

Officials have attributed recent weather patterns as the cause for slow-moving air quality improvement.

"We've shifted to more of a southwesterly [wind](#)-flow aloft, which is pushing that thicker smoke cover away from the region, but it hasn't been strong enough to push all of the smoke out of the region," said David Kook, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in White Lake Township.

There is no estimated date for when smoke plumes will completely dissipate from the region, Kook said.

"It seems like at this point, as long as those fires keep burning, anytime we get a northerly wind, its just going to pull it back down over the area," Kook said. "So, we might get some westly winds to push the smoke mostly out of the area for a while, but if we get a cold front with north winds behind the front, its just going to pull the smoke back down until those fires quit burning."

At noon Saturday, AirNow.gov reported an [air quality index](#) of 79 for Detroit, lowering the city's air quality to a "moderate" range.

The smoke originated from more than 200 out-of-control wildfires in Canada. The haze was evident as far north as Presque Isle Park in Marquette along Lake Superior.

Early Wednesday, the rating was up to 337. At one point on Tuesday, Detroit had the worst air quality in the world, according to IQAir, one measure of air quality. On Wednesday, that title went to Chicago, with Detroit just behind it.

Particulate matter isn't the only problem. Ozone alerts also were issued for Saturday in much of the state.

Saturday marks the second Ozone Action Day in a row and 11th Ozone Action Day of 2023 for southeast Michigan, according to the Southeast

Michigan Council of Governments. It will impact St. Clair, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw, Wayne, Lenawee and Monroe counties, the weather service said.

Ozone is created by a reaction of nitrous oxides and volatile organic compounds that takes place on hot, sunny days. Nitrous oxides and [volatile organic compounds](#) come from sources including vehicle exhaust, paints, fumes from oil and gas refineries and chemical plants.

To help lower pollutant emissions on Ozone Action Days, people can:

- Delay mowing their lawn until evening or the next day
- Drive less, telecommute, bike, or walk
- Avoid refueling their vehicles during daylight hours
- Delay or combine errands
- Reduce electricity use

Saturday temperatures were expected to reach mid-to-upper 80s with a 30% chance of thunderstorms through the afternoon, which was expected to increase to 70% by Saturday evening, Kook said.

On Sunday, a [cold front](#) will move in as temperatures are expected to drop to mid-70s with a 60% chance of thunderstorm throughout the day, Kook said.

Ozone alerts are expected to return Monday and Tuesday as temperatures will increase again to 90s, the weather service said.

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