

Beijingers react to smog: 'This is life' and 'like a dream'

8 December 2015



A woman uses a scarf and others wear masks to cover their face from pollutants as they walk along a street on a polluted day in Beijing, Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2015. Schools closed and rush-hour roads were much quieter than normal as Beijing's first-ever red alert for smog took effect Tuesday, closing many factories and invoking restrictions to keep half the city's vehicles off the roads. (AP Photo/Andy Wong)

Beijing issued a red alert this week for smog, triggering restrictions on traffic, school closures and factory suspensions. City residents reacted with a mix of alarm and nonchalance:

"This is modern life for Beijing people. We wanted to develop, and now we pay the price," Beijing office worker Cao Yong said during a break from work.

"You have to do whatever you can to protect yourself," Beijing resident Li Huiwen said while stopping at a market. "Even when wearing the mask, I feel uncomfortable and don't have any energy."

A man who gave only his surname, Du, said the haze was good for taking photographs of old buildings and that he was taking advantage of a lack of crowds near Beijing's ancient Forbidden City. "I like this kind of haziness. It gives a blurry feeling and makes you feel like you're in a dream."

"You live in Beijing, you just get used to it. Every winter is like this," said a store clerk who gave only her surname, Sun, and who said the restrictions were a nuisance. "But now that they're canceling school, it becomes really inconvenient. If you don't get time off from work, who watches the kid?"

"I would keep myself indoors, and wear a mask all the time if I'm outside on smoggy days. And air purifiers at home are a must," Beijing resident Sun Yuanyuan said.



Commuters wear masks to protect themselves from pollutants as they walk out from a subway station on a polluted day in Beijing, Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2015. Schools

closed and rush-hour roads were much quieter than normal as Beijing's first-ever red alert for smog took effect Tuesday, closing many factories and invoking restrictions to keep half the city's vehicles off the roads. (AP Photo/Andy Wong)

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