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Health officials warn about impact of smoke from Apple Fire

One coronavirus testing site moves due to proximity to fire

A wildfire that is burning near Banning is generating smoke and ash that is impacting the San Gorgonio Pass and communities in and around the San Jacinto Mountains, prompting health officials to urge residents to take precautions with the unhealthy air quality levels.

“Residents throughout portions of the San Gorgonio Pass, particularly those living or working near the fire, need to be aware of the risks of breathing unhealthy air and take steps to keep safe,” said Dr. Cameron Kaiser, Riverside County public health officer.

Kaiser recommends that those who live in areas impacted by smoke and ash should avoid strenuous activity, remain indoors with the air-conditioning on and windows and doors closed. Also, keep the indoor air fresh with a clean filtering system to prevent from bringing smoke inside.

Wildfire smoke can cause a range of health issues, which include burning eyes, runny nose, shortness of breath, scratchy throat, headaches and chest pains. Smoke can also worsen chronic heart and lung disease.

Officials also stress the importance of following evacuation instructions for the safety of all residents living in the evacuation areas. Safety steps have been taken to protect residents and workers at the reception and care site located at Beaumont High School.

“We have taken a number of precautions to ensure everyone is safe while they are evacuated,” said Bruce Barton, director of the County of Riverside Emergency Management Department. “In

addition to sheltering away from smoke, we implemented expanded precautions to ensure evacuated residents are protected from COVID with screening, physical distancing, sanitation stations and a number of other safety measures.”

Meanwhile, the state-operated coronavirus testing site at the Noble Creek Community Center in Beaumont has been closed because of the Apple Fire and will open at the Beaumont Women’s Club, 306 E. 6th Street. The move is effective immediately and will be in place until further notice.

Those with existing appointments will be notified about the change.

The hours of operation remain the same – 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. To make an appointment at the Beaumont location, call 888-634-1123 or click online <https://lhi.care/covidtesting>.

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