

DOH Guidance on Short-term Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂) Advisory Levels

SO ₂ Conc. (ppm) ¹	Color Code & Air Quality Condition	Air Quality Description	Recommended Action/Activity ²		
			Sensitive Groups ³	People Experiencing Health Effects ³	Everyone Else
0 – 0.10	Green (Good)	Considered satisfactory & poses little or no risk	Highly sensitive individuals may be affected at these levels		Potential health effects not expected
0.11-0.20	Yellow (Moderate)	Acceptable, however, may be moderate health concern for small number of people	Be aware that levels are slightly elevated	If you experience breathing difficulties, such as chest tightness or wheezing, stop activities, use a rescue inhaler and find a place to sit down and rest.	Potential health effects not expected, however actions to reduce exposure to vog may be useful
0.21–1.00	Orange (Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups)	Members in sensitive groups, including healthy individuals with mild asthma, may experience health effects. They may be affected at lower levels than general public. Toward the upper end of this range, most asthmatics who are active outdoors are likely to experience some breathing difficulties. General public not expected to be affected in this range.	Avoid outdoor activities that cause heavy breathing or breathing through the mouth ⁴	If you experience breathing difficulties, such as chest tightness or wheezing, stop activities, use a rescue inhaler and find a place to sit down and rest.	Potential health effects not expected, however actions to reduce exposure to vog may be useful
1.01–3.00	Red (Unhealthy)	Everyone may begin to experience health effects. Members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.	Avoid outdoor activities & remain indoors	Consider leaving the area	Avoid outdoor activities that cause heavy breathing or breathing through the mouth ⁴
3.01–5.00	Purple (Very Unhealthy)	Triggers health alert, meaning everyone may experience more serious health effects.	Avoid outdoor activities & remain indoors	Leave the area & seek medical help	Avoid outdoor activities & remain indoors
> 5.01	Maroon (Hazardous)	Triggers health warnings of emergency conditions. Entire population is more likely to be affected.	Avoid outdoor activities & remain indoors. Leave the area if directed by Civil Defense	Leave the area & seek medical help	Avoid outdoor activities & remain indoors. Leave the area if directed by Civil Defense

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Notes:

- Asthmatics & persons with chronic respiratory disease: **ALWAYS** have your medications available. Reducing your exertion level so that you can breathe through your nose will reduce the amount of SO₂ that reaches your lungs.
- People experiencing health effects: Contact your doctor as soon as possible if any problems develop, as respiratory conditions might worsen rapidly in heavy SO₂ or vog conditions.
- People have different sensitivities to SO₂. Use this table to learn how sensitive you are to SO₂, so that you can develop appropriate measures to protect your health and avoid serious responses.

1. Based on 15-minute average. Part per million equals part per billion divided by 1000.
2. **Susceptible individuals** may develop symptoms at or below the Warning limits
3. **Sensitive Groups** = children and individuals with pre-existing respiratory conditions such as asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, lung or heart disease. Note: Some people with mild asthma may not be aware of it. If you have breathing difficulties at low levels of SO₂, check with your healthcare provider.
4. People react differently to SO₂-some are more sensitive. The nasal passages can remove a lot of SO₂ before it gets to the lungs. For many people simply reducing activity levels enough so that they can breathe through the nose will permit them to be outdoors without symptoms.