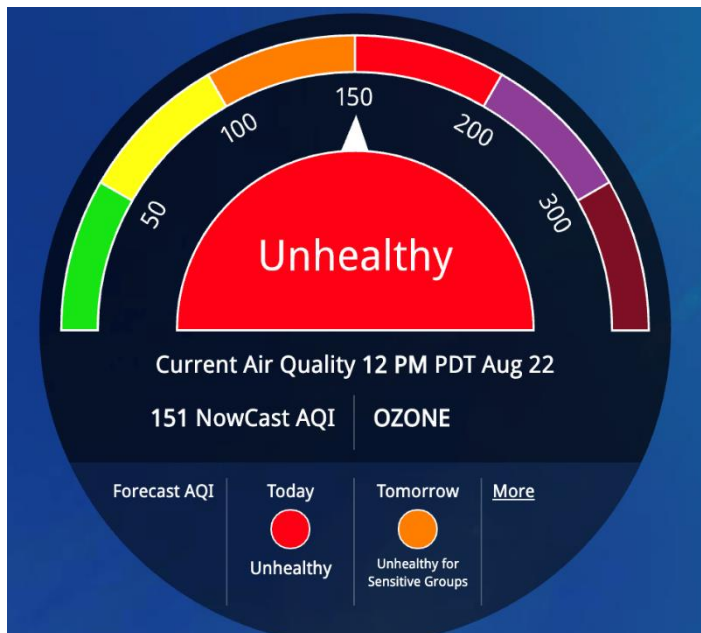# How to Find Out About the Smoky Skies
By Lester Lubetkin

Have you ever wondered "where is this smoke coming from and how unsafe is it?" In order to better answer that question, there are a couple of websites that might be very useful:

AirNow.gov (https://www.airnow.gov): This is an excellent website with loads of information about air quality, including interactive maps and air quality forecasts.

AirNow is a partnership of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Park Service, NASA, Centers for Disease Control, and tribal, state, and local air quality agencies.
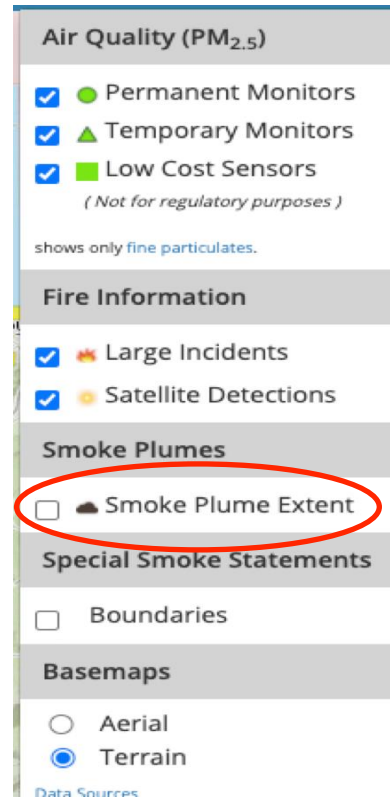
The **Fire and Smoke Map** on this website lets you explore the data collected from specific air quality sensors located around El Dorado County and beyond and see the location of current fires. You can see sensors or monitors - from the highest-quality permanent monitors to portable, low-cost sensors. At this site, you can see the actual readings of particulate matter and descriptions of the health risks.

Turning on and off layers, by clicking on the "layer" icon in the upper right corner and then selecting the layers is also helpful. Turning on "Smoke Plume Extent" let will allow you to see where the smoke was coming from.
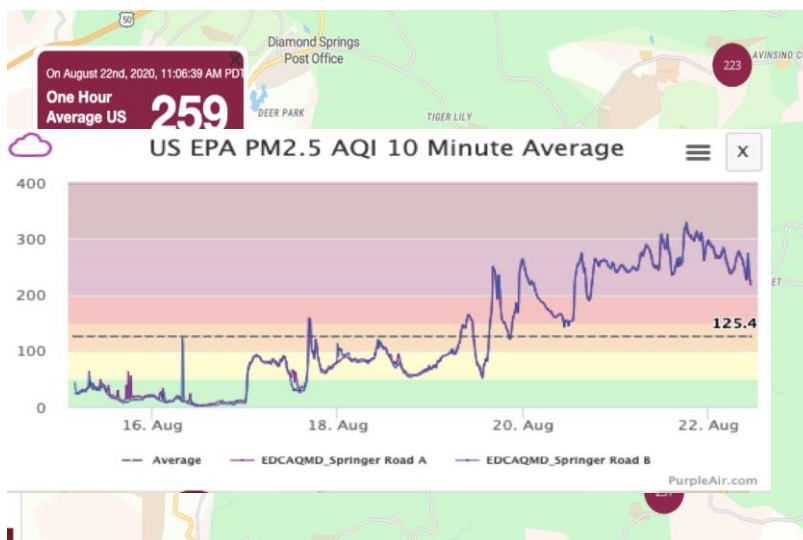
The smoke plume information comes from satellite data and is updated quite regularly. However, with lots of fires around the state, smoke is coming from multiple sources, so it is hard to recognize the plume from any one fire. It helps to turn off "Smoke Plume Extent" at times, so you can see the base map to get yourself located.

Be sure to zoom in and out (using the "+/-" in the lower right corner) to see town and road names or to get the big picture across the region.
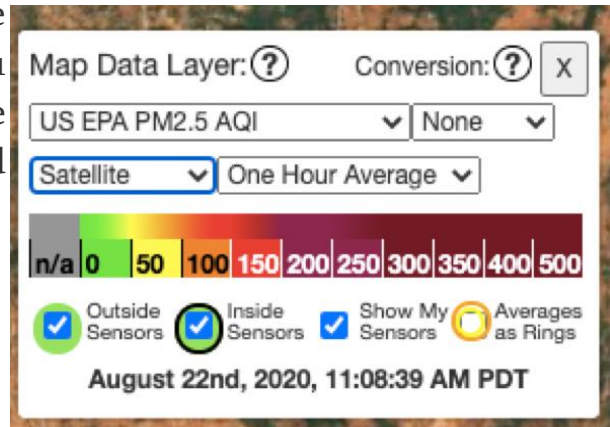
El Dorado County's Air Quality Management District Website

The website describes air quality conditions in key locations, including Placerville and Pollock Pines.

You can find the **Purple Air Sensor Map** for El Dorado County (www.edcgov.us), at the bottom of the Home page under "Wildfire Information and Links". Here you will get a color-coded map of air quality sensors throughout the County and displays of trends and history of smoke conditions over the previous week.

Down in the lower left corner of the webpage, you'll see a box that allows you to change all sorts of features, such as the base map, temperature display, and format.

Our members contribute…

TIP: Here's a suggestion from one of the members of the Oak Hill Area Fire Safe Council about how you can reduce the amount of smoke in your home during these smoky days.

Get some cut-to-fit activated charcoal filter paper for your air conditioner or furnace intake. (You can usually find it at a local hardware store or on Amazon.)

Each year, cut a piece of the filter paper to fit, and insert it in the intake vent of your furnace or air conditioner. Then, when you run the appliance (you need only run the fan) it removes smoke particles quickly and the air in the house is clean again. You can also put the paper in the air intake of a window air conditioner, box fan or swamp cooler.