

July 29, 2026

MEMO TO: Retirement Home Licensees

FROM: Michèle Sanborn, Assistant Deputy Minister
Policy, Programs and Strategic Partnerships Division
Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility

SUBJECT: Air Quality and Wildfire Smoke in Ontario – Information for
Retirement Home Licensees

I want to begin by thanking you and your teams for your continued efforts to ensure the health, safety, and comfort of residents. We recognize that this summer has brought periods of extreme heat and poor air quality to some communities across Ontario.

Adults over the age of 65 are particularly vulnerable to poor air quality including those with additional risk factors such as certain cardiovascular and respiratory conditions. Licensees are encouraged to remind residents to follow the advice of their healthcare providers and to discuss how air quality may affect their individual health and well-being.

I understand that residents, caregivers and families will likely have concerns during this time. I hope that the following information and resources will be helpful.

Quick Tips:

Where appropriate and feasible, licensees may wish to consider the following measures during periods of poor air quality:

- Monitor local air quality conditions and refer to guidance and alerts from local public health units, Environment and Climate Change Canada and others;
- Limit outdoor activities with residents when air quality is poor, particularly for residents who may be at higher risk;

- Keep windows and exterior doors closed (when air quality is poor) where feasible;
- Where appropriate, limit outdoor air intake through HVAC systems, while ensuring continued safe operation of building systems;
- Continue to monitor residents for any changes in health status or symptoms that may be associated with poor air quality; and
- Support residents, families, caregivers, and staff who may have questions or concerns about current air quality conditions.

Information Sources:

- [Wildfires and Health Effects | Public Health Ontario](#)
- [Ontario - Air Quality Health Index \(AQHI\) | Environment and Climate Change Canada](#)
- [Ontario Forest Fire Info Map](#)
- [Forest fires | ontario.ca](#)
- [Canadian Wildland Fire Information System | Natural Resources Canada](#)
- [Wildfire Smoke and Air Quality Health Reference Document | ontario.ca](#)

Thank you again for your continued dedication to resident care and safety. Your efforts are deeply appreciated, particularly during periods of extreme weather and challenging environmental conditions.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Michèle Sanborn

- c: Peter Kaftarian, Deputy Minister, Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility
 Marsha Pinto, Director, Retirement Homes Branch, Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility
 Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Office of Chief Medical Officer of Health
 Lucy Becker, Interim Chief Executive Officer and Registrar, Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority
 Cathy Hecimovich, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Retirement Communities Association
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