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EPA study of Mt Barker wood smoke

The Environment Protection Authority is working with the Mount Barker District Council and residents to assess the effect of wood smoke on air quality at Mount Barker.

The study will measure wood smoke particulate levels and determine whether air quality is within national standards.

An air quality monitor was installed in April at Alexandrina Rd and is capturing data on particulate matter of 10 micrometres (PM₁₀) and 2.5 micrometres (PM_{2.5}). The data is available [online](#) in real time.

EPA Director Science and Systems Keith Baldry said the EPA study was set up in response to advice from residents in the area that wood smoke was a problem during the colder months.

“The real-time air quality and weather data will be made publicly available during the initial 12-month study period, with a report on the findings to be published around October 2023,” he said.

“We also encourage residents to take part in the study because they can provide valuable local knowledge to supplement the data.

“We know that there can be many health effects from exposure to particulate matter and that it can exacerbate conditions such as asthma and other respiratory diseases.

“We also know that particle pollution from wood smoke is one of the main sources.”

Air pollution has a variety of causes, including industry, vehicles, domestic sources such as wood heaters, and natural events such as bushfires and dust storms.

There is increasing evidence that even relatively low levels of air pollution can have adverse effects on human health, particularly for children, the elderly and those with respiratory and cardiovascular conditions.

Inefficient use of wood heaters can generate large amounts of PM_{2.5}, and smaller particles can have a greater impact on the lungs.

The EPA [website](#) has advice on the correct use of wood heaters to reduce their impact on the environment and the community. The brochure *Burn Better for Good* can also be downloaded from the site.

Mr Baldry said SA Health would assess the findings of the EPA study from a health perspective.

A community information session is planned for end of August to outline the study and explain how residents can get involved.

More information about the study can be found on the project’s Engage EPA [webpage](#).