

Unhealthy API readings due to haze from Sumatra

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The 'unhealthy' air quality recorded in parts of Peninsular Malaysia today is due to transboundary haze billowing from Indonesia.

According to the Environment Department (DOE) today, as of 8pm, 12 air quality monitoring stations recorded air pollutant indices (API) considered unhealthy, which is a reading between 101 and 200.

"Forest fires in southern Sumatra, and central and southern Kalimantan, Indonesia, have caused transboundary haze and affected API readings in large portions of Western Peninsular Malaysia and parts of Western Sarawak," said DOE director-general Wan Abdul Latiff Wan Jaffar.

The 12 stations that recorded unhealthy API readings as of 8pm today were:

- Seberang Jaya, Penang (API 110)
- Taiping, Perak (API 118)

- Tasek, Perak (API 106)
- Tanjung Malim, Perak (API 106)
- Batu Muda, Kuala Lumpur (API 151)
- Cheras, Kuala Lumpur (API 155)
- Putrajaya (API 115)
- Kuala Selangor, Selangor (API 153)
- Petaling Jaya, Selangor (API 153)
- Shah Alam, Selangor (API 142)
- Nilai, Negeri Sembilan (API 126)
- Johan Setia, Selangor (API 139)

It should be noted that these readings are based on an average of measurements made in the preceding 24 hours. Therefore, it may be slow to respond to abrupt changes in air quality.

Latiff said based on monitoring by the US-operated NOAA-20 satellite, a total of 52 hotspots have been detected in Sumatra and 264 in Kalimantan today. None were detected in Malaysia.

Citing the Asean Specialised Meteorological Centre, he said the central and southern regions of Sumatra and Southern Kalimantan are still seeing persistent dry weather.

“Persistent clusters of hotspots in Southern Sumatra and Jambi are releasing moderate-to-thick haze smoke that is carried northwest by the wind.

“In Kalimantan, persistent clusters of hotspots in central and south Kalimantan are releasing haze smoke that could cause haze in Western Sarawak.

“There is rain in some parts of Western Kalimantan, and this could reduce the hotspots and haze there,” Latiff said.

He also reiterated that the DOE has stepped up its enforcement activities. The National Open Burning Action Plan and National Haze Action Plan have been activated to coordinate government agencies.

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