

GUIDELINES FOR SMOKE EXPOSURE TO PROPERTY RESULTING FROM THE MONTGOMERY STREET FIRE

BINGHAMTON, NY – Based on currently available information, a fire broke out in the vicinity of Montgomery Street in Binghamton during the late afternoon of August 31, 2004.

The specific chemical make up of the smoke and soot from a fire depend upon the materials being burned and also on things like the temperature of the fire and the amount of oxygen. Exposure to any kind of smoke over the long term is a health concern so it is best to minimize your exposure to smoke. Short-term exposure to smoke can produce irritation of the eyes and respiratory tract, but these symptoms should end once the odors stops.

The chemicals which produce the odors should disperse quickly and do not present a long-term health concern. The soot from the fire may be of more concern for the long term. To reduce exposure to the soot, which may remain after the fire, the New York State Department of Health and Broome County Health Department have developed the following guidelines for taking care of your home and gardens:

- While the smoke is present outside, it is best to close the windows and turn off the air conditioner;
- Once the fire has been put out, if smoke is present inside the house, open windows to allow fresh air in;
- If there is obvious soot, vacuum it from floors and furniture and wash it from hard surfaces such as tables and countertops with soap and warm water;
- Throw out any food that was left in the open at the time of the fire. This is because of possible spoilage as well as concern for contamination;
- Wash all dishes and eating utensils before using;
- In outdoor areas with soot, do not eat garden vegetables that are difficult to wash, such as lettuce, chard, cauliflower and broccoli. Cut off the vegetable and allow the plant to re-grow. For leafy packed heads such as cabbage, discard the outer leaves and use the clean, inner leaves, or cut off the cabbage head and allow the plant to re-grow. Hard fruits and vegetables such as tomatoes, squash, apples, berries, and beans should be washed or peeled before serving. Root vegetables such as potatoes, or any garden produce which grows after the fire may be eaten after normal washing;
- If outdoor furniture and play equipment have soot on the surfaces, they should be washed with soap and water. If soot is visible in sand boxes, rake off the top layer and place in the garbage can;
- Discard open pet food and water and wash the pet's dishes;
- If clothing appears to be soiled, clean it in the normal fashion;
- If there is soot on a wading or swimming pool surface, skim off the surface or overfill it so that floating particles are washed out;
- If anyone is ill, follow your normal procedures for seeking medical care.

For questions concerning smoke impact on your residence call the Broome County Health Department, Division of Environmental Health Services at 607-778-2887 during regular business hours.