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PRESS RELEASE

Urgent Advisory on Air Quality Concerns Due to Wildfires

Belmopan, May 27, 2024.

The Ministry of Health & Wellness (MoHW) and the Department of the Environment (DoE) inform the public of significant air quality concerns resulting from ongoing wildfires that are affecting several communities in the Toledo and Cayo districts. These wildfires have caused a substantial increase in air pollution due to smoke, which can lead to health risks for the population, especially vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing respiratory conditions. The government is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all residents in the affected communities and will provide regular updates as the situation evolves.

The following health advisories are being urged:

1. **Stay Indoors:** Residents are advised to remain indoors as much as possible, especially during periods of heavy smoke.
2. **Keep Windows and Doors Closed:** Ensure that your living spaces are sealed to prevent smoke from entering.
3. **Use Air Purifiers:** If available, use air purifiers to reduce indoor air pollution.
4. **Limit Outdoor Activities:** Minimize outdoor physical activities to reduce exposure to polluted air.
5. **Seek Medical Attention:** Individuals experiencing respiratory issues should seek immediate medical attention.
6. **Wear Masks:** Wear masks when outdoors in affected areas to filter out fine particles.

MoHW, in collaboration with the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO), the Department of the Environment, and the Ministry of Agriculture are closely monitoring the situation. Efforts are currently being made to control the wildfires and mitigate the impact on air quality. The DoE is obtaining air quality monitoring equipment that will be installed in strategic areas to detect changes in ambient air quality, which will assist in our national response and further decision-making on this matter.

All citizens are urged to stay informed through official channels and comply with the advisories issued by the Ministry of Health & Wellness. Farmers in rural communities are urged to cease and desist from lighting illegal fires which further compound the problem.

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