**Covid-19 and Air Pollution **

While Covid-19 continues to dominate the heads lines recent studies have found a new issue rapidly becoming a very important one in the fight against the pandemic. Much research has shown correlation between Covid-19 mortality rates and air quality pollution, prompting the EPA to put out new Facts and Questions on their Covid-19 Webpage.

One recent study found that even small increases in fine particulate matter, known as PM2.5, have had an outsized effect in the US. An increase of just 1 microgram per cubic metre corresponded to a 15% increase in Covid-19 deaths, according to the researchers, led by Xiao Wu and Rachel Nethery at the at the Harvard University T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

“The evidence we have is pretty clear that people who have been living in places that are more polluted over time, that they are more likely to die from coronavirus,” says Aaron Bernstein, the director of the Center for Climate, Health, and Global Environment at Harvard University.

In the study, which looked at 3,080 counties in the US, people who had lived in counties with long-term pollution exposure for 15-20 years had significantly higher mortality rates, says Wu.

A study of air quality in Italy’s northern provinces of Lombardy and Emilia Romagna also found a correlation between Covid-19 mortality rates and high levels of pollution. Lombardy makes up the vast majority of the country’s deaths, at 13,325 of Italy’s 26,644 as of 26 April, while Emilia Romagna was the province with the next greatest death toll, at 3,386. The researchers questioned the role of low air quality in their becoming hotspots, concluding that: “the high level of pollution in northern Italy should be considered an additional co-factor of the high level of lethality recorded in that area”.

Which all brings to mind the question of how we can protect our homes from air pollution and covid-19. According to the EPAs newly released information the use of air purifiers can help reduce airborne contaminants including viruses in a home or confined space. However, by itself, a portable air cleaner **is not enough** to protect people from COVID-19. When used along with other best practices recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, operating an air cleaner can be part of a plan to protect yourself and your family.

The use of ozone generators is not advised as it will not remove viruses, bacteria, mold or other biological pollutants. In fact, the best way to protect your home and family is to utilize best practices recommended by the CDC and ventilate your home by opening windows and doors when the air outside is safe. Air pollution ranges of different cities can be monitored on AirNow.com, which is also a good indicator of how outside air will impact those among us who have asthma or respiratory issues.

Based off this emerging information the field of indoor and outdoor air quality and pollution is more important than ever for the health and safety of the Peoria Tribe Members and all peoples. You can do your part by supporting your local Environmental Specialist, keeping your home ventilated and your particulate matter counts low!

Sources: <https://www.airnow.gov/>

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200427-how-air-pollution-exacerbates-covid-19>

<https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/will-air-cleaner-or-air-purifier-help-protect-me-and-my-family-covid-19-my-home?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=>

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