

## 4/30/21 English Transcript of Justicia Ambiental Radio Episode 2

Thanks to the previous radio program and Ira's summary, we know a little more about climate change and the importance in addressing it. But how does it affect us here in Oregon?

**Climate Change in Oregon:** According to the Oregon Global warming Commission report about the latest effects of climate change in Oregon, the fire season is starting earlier in the spring and ending later in the fall. Fire season in Oregon is generally from late July to mid September, but as early as two weeks ago, we had a fire danger warning in Oregon. We are now starting to see these warnings as early as April because warmer and drier conditions caused by climate change make wood drier, which makes fires more susceptible to spread.

**Particulate Matter:** Whenever anything is burned in a fire, it releases a pollutant called Particulate Matter. Particulate matter is exactly what it sounds like - really small pieces of matter that have been burned and are so small that they are suspended in the air. There are two types of particulate matter: PM 2.5 and PM 10. Both types are as small as bacteria. The smaller of the two, PM 2.5, is the type of particulate matter primarily released by wildfires.

**Health Effect:** Since PM 2.5 is so small, when it is breathed in, it can make its way very far into the lungs. This causes long term respiratory illnesses, such as asthma and lung disease. People with asthma and other respiratory illnesses are more vulnerable when exposed to PM 2.5 and could experience more severe symptoms.

Who remembers the red-orange skies during last year's wildfire season? Those red-orange skies were caused by the large concentrations of particulate matter in the air. Particulate Matter in the atmosphere as a result of fire is visible when the skies turn orange and red because the particulate matter is scattering the light from the sun.

**Oregon Health Effects:** The Oregon Health Authority recorded a 29% rise in emergency room visits for respiratory symptoms in the Portland metro region during the 2017 Eagle Creek Fire. During the first two weeks of September of last year, emergency rooms were full due to so many people being hospitalized as a result of either wildfire smoke, COVID-19, or both. For folks with respiratory illnesses, it was a lot harder for them to get access to the healthcare they needed. We are talking about a problem that will continue to have drastic effects on our healthcare systems. The lengthening of wildfire season is concerning because it will likely increase the number of and severity of wildfires in Oregon, resulting in more respiratory illnesses and hospitalizations. As wildfires become more common and more intense, they will continue to harm our healthcare systems.

**Farmworkers:** Since farmworkers are more likely to have to work outside during wildfires in conditions where they have no other choice but to breathe in smoke, they are more at risk of getting these respiratory illnesses. After this next break, Ira will be talking about how it is important to hear from farmworkers' experiences to make sure that we are advocating for the best rules to guarantee that our workers are protected.