



THE MALAYSIAN THORACIC SOCIETY

STATEMENT BY THE MALAYSIAN THORACIC SOCIETY ON THE CURRENT HAZE SITUATION IN MALAYSIA

The Malaysian Thoracic Society (MTS) is deeply concerned about the current deterioration in air quality across several parts of Malaysia. This is not merely an environmental issue—it is a significant public health threat, particularly to our lungs and respiratory system.

Sarawak is currently bearing the brunt of the haze. As of 11 September, 11 areas in Sarawak recorded unhealthy Air Pollutant Index (API) readings, including Serian, Kuching, Samarahan, Sri Aman, Sarikei, Sibu, Mukah, Bintulu and Miri. Unhealthy readings have also been recorded in parts of Sabah, Johor and Labuan.

The recent episode has been particularly severe in Sarawak, with Kuching, Serian, Sri Aman and Samarahan reaching very unhealthy levels earlier this week. Transboundary smoke from extensive fires in Kalimantan and Sumatera has contributed significantly to the situation.

Our immediate advice to the public is simple: protect your lungs

Those in areas experiencing unhealthy or worse air quality should reduce prolonged outdoor activities, particularly strenuous exercise. Children, older adults, pregnant women and people with asthma, COPD, heart disease and other chronic illnesses should take extra precautions and remain indoors as much as practicable when air quality deteriorates.

Where outdoor exposure is unavoidable, a properly fitted **N95 or equivalent particulate respirator** provides substantially better protection against fine particles than ordinary surgical or cloth masks. Keep windows and doors closed when appropriate, and consider using air conditioning and/or air purifiers where available. People with respiratory disease should ensure that their regular medications are available and seek medical attention if they develop worsening breathlessness, persistent wheezing, chest tightness or other significant symptoms.

However, protecting people during a haze episode is only half the solution.

We must prevent this from happening again

Haze of this magnitude should not become an annual inevitability. While weather and dry conditions can worsen fires, the ignition and uncontrolled burning of forests, peatlands and agricultural land are largely preventable human activities. Recent reports indicate extensive fires across parts of Indonesia, with transboundary smoke affecting neighbouring countries including Malaysia.

MTS therefore urges the Malaysian Government to strengthen regional diplomatic engagement, real-time monitoring, enforcement and accountability under existing ASEAN mechanisms; intensify surveillance of local open burning; strengthen early-warning and firefighting capacity; and pursue meaningful action against parties responsible for fires that endanger public health across national borders.

Open burning of garden waste is illegal but is still commonplace during this time of transboundary haze. MTS urges the Department of Environment to step up public awareness and enforcement activities to prevent further deterioration of air quality.

Clean air is not a luxury. It is a basic requirement for healthy lungs and a healthy society

We should not wait for another emergency declaration before acting. Prevention, accountability and regional cooperation must begin **before the next fire starts**.

12th September 2026