

# REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

March 3 - 9, 2022

## WEEKLY EVENTS

- On March 3, 2022, Thailand found 42,138 positive ATK test results for COVID-19, which is a record high for the estimated number via ATK. It is expected that many people with positive ATK results may not have reported them to public health officials.
- Malaysia and Thailand are easing COVID-19 control measures to welcome tourists from both countries by opening a special Vaccinated Travel Lane (VTL) starting on March 15, 2022.
- On March 8, 2022, the Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health issued warnings for people to prevent diseases and health hazards during the summer. The two groups are classified as follows:
  - Gastrointestinal and waterborne diseases: diarrhea, typhoid fever, food poisoning, cholera, and Hepatitis A
  - Health hazards: illnesses and death related to hot weather, smog, and drowning

## HIGH PM2.5 LEVELS ALONG THE BORDER ARE FEARED TO AFFECT THE HEALTH OF HIGH-RISK GROUPS

At the end of January 2022, the Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency (GISTDA) used a forest fire tracking satellite, which found more than 300 heat points in Thailand, 801 heat points along with Thai/Cambodia border and 255 heat points along the Thai/Lao border. These heat points are expected to generate PM2.5 dust in the north, northeast and the eastern regions of Thailand, consistent with the report of the Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health. Many heat points were found in the upper northern area, which includes the burning of land for agriculture in Thailand and neighboring countries especially during the summer when temperatures heat up. This results in an increase in small dust particles. The dust content of PM2.5 is 98 micrograms per cubic meter. As a result, those who inhale small dust particles may develop symptoms such as nasal irritation or productive coughing. Special surveillance may be needed for populations at risk including young children, the elderly, and people with lung diseases, allergies, asthma, or emphysema. More severe symptoms may include chest tightness, breathlessness, or difficulty breathing and require special health care. Due to the small size of dust particles, symptoms can be easily exacerbated and in the long term, they can cause lung cancer or cardiovascular disease. Therefore, people should closely monitor the situation of air quality in their residential areas.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

- Officials should closely monitor the air quality situation by checking the PM 2.5 and AQI value at the website <http://air4thai.pcd.go.th> or the Air4Thai application of the Pollution Control Department. If unhealthy values are reported, migrant health volunteers should raise awareness to notify people in the respective areas. The communities may be notified through the village broadcasting towers on a daily basis when there are high levels of PM2.5. It is recommended to wear masks that protect against PM2.5. Masks must cover the nose and mouth, rather than be worn under the chin.
- In areas where the dust levels exceed the standard, focus on educating people that in the event they have abnormal respiratory symptoms as mentioned above, they should see a doctor.
- Advise people in the community to reduce air pollution through land management practices: removing dead plants and brush, avoiding activities that cause wildfires, and avoiding open-burning practices. If there are problems in management, advice should be sought from the agricultural district authorities.

## INFORMATION COLLECTED AND ANALYZED BY

Multisectoral Capacity Development Program for Public Health Emergency Detection and Response in Border Areas

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- Division of Epidemiology/Division of Communicable Diseases/ Bureau of Risk Communication, Department of Disease Control March 8, 2022