

UNHEALTHY AIR PROTOCOLS for FARMERS MARKETS

Colleen Donovan, September 2020

Why consider calling it an “UNHEALTHY AIR PROTOCOL”?

Regrettably, there may be other reasons that the Air Quality Index goes crazy. Today it is wildfire smoke, tomorrow it could be smoke from other sources (structural, etc.), or a chemical spill or some other tragedy. (I’m not mentioning Hanford...) And really, what they all share, regardless of source, is that our air is dodgy.

Who is Your CORE concern?

People are affected by whatever you do. It’s complicated as the interest (and health) of staff, vendors, and shoppers may be at odds.

Note: being in unhealthy air has a greater impact when it is for hours than when it is for minutes.

What is your TRIGGER to take action?

After monitoring a situation through the news or online, what triggers your next step?

- An [AQI reading](#)? Many markets have been using the 200 mark. Is it a real time reading or a forecast?
- A local Public Health Warning or Advisory?

Notes:

- Expert, official or public sources are less likely to be questioned.
- Be prepared for conflicting data.
- You may have different triggers for different actions. For example, 200 may lead to a discussion of reducing the market hours, whereas 300 is automatic closure.

WHEN does the trigger happen?

We know all of you are very concerned for your farmers who harvest just for your market, and products are usually perishable. They also may be traveling.

Consider planning your trigger so that farmers know when they will have a green or red light to harvest for your market. And well before they load their trucks and start their traveling. That might mean a full 24 hours in advance?

What is the ACTION?

If you hit your trigger, whatever it is, what is the market’s plan? Close? Reduce hours? Maybe you have a two-part plan???

Note: will you allow/encourage/discourage vendors to come anyway and use the market site to sell? What is your messaging about this?

WHO decides?

Invariably, not everyone will be happy with whatever your market decides. Managers need back up. To mitigate the toil and toxicity this may bring, try to present a united front. Best case

scenario this would be the manager and board leadership together. Agree on your process and messaging. Do not give in to airing disagreements in the heat of the moment.

What mitigating practices can you do?

- Waive any no show fees
- Encourage anyone with a health condition to not come (and with no penalties)
- Provide N95 or KN95 masks for staff, vendors, shoppers if you have them
- Give people breaks. And ice cream.

COMMUNICATION

People can live with decisions more easily if they know how and when they will be made. (Note: does not increase their agreeability and charm, just their understanding.)

Tell people:

- a) You are concerned for everyone's health and wellbeing.
- b) How decisions will be made and what the likely scenarios are so they can prepare
- c) Follow what you say you said you will do (to the best of your ability; explain changes)
- d) Let people know HOW the decision(s) will be communicated: email, Facebook, phone call, chat, text, PSA etc.

Most of all, please take care!

Literally, put your own oxygen mask on first before helping others. This too shall pass.