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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AVMED ADVISES FLORIDA RESIDENTS ON HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH RAMPANT WILDFIRES

MIAMI, June 24, 2011 — With more than 90 percent of Florida in a state of drought and more than 300 wildfires burning across the state, air quality in much of the state has taken a significant hit. It's been reported recently that air quality is now so poor that it can be as dangerous as inhaling secondhand smoke while sitting next to a driver in a car. As one of Florida's largest health plan companies, AvMed Health Plans is concerned not only for the well-being of its members, but for all Floridians affected by the wildfires.

"As AvMed's home and focus is in Florida, our concern is always for the well-being of its residents," said Ed Hannum, President and COO of AvMed. "We want to ensure that Florida residents are taking the appropriate steps to protect themselves against, and treat, any exposure to the smoke in the air from these rampant wildfires."

According to the American Lung Association, when organic materials such as trees, plants and bushes burn, they give off approximately 200 different kinds of gases and particles. These chemicals are irritants to everyone, and the amount inhaled is dangerous, particularly to those predisposed to respiratory conditions.

From the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, AvMed issued these guidelines for Florida residents on how to tell if smoke is affecting their health:

- Smoke may cause coughing, scratchy throat, irritated sinuses, shortness of breath, chest pain, headaches, stinging eyes and runny nose.
- People with heart disease may experience chest pain, rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath and fatigue.
- People with pre-existing respiratory conditions may experience worsened symptoms, such as:
 - Inability to breathe normally
 - Cough with or without mucus
 - Chest discomfort
 - Wheezing and shortness of breath

During high smoke levels, even healthy people may experience these symptoms.

In order to stay protected from the smoke, try to limit exposure whenever possible:

- Stay indoors when possible and run your air conditioning.
- Avoid prolonged outdoor activities in areas with extreme smoky conditions.
- Follow doctors' advice about taking medications and following care management plans for any respiratory conditions. Call a doctor if symptoms worsen.

(more)

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For more information on how to protect against the smoke from Florida's current wildfires, visit the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Smoke and Air Quality website, http://www.dep.state.fl.us/air/about_air/smoke_air_quality.htm, or contact your primary care physician.

About AvMed Health Plans

For more than 40 years, Floridians have joined AvMed for its superior network of doctors, specialists and hospitals, health and wellness programs, and personalized round-the-clock service. AvMed is one of Florida's oldest and largest not-for-profit health plans, and is solely focused on providing health coverage to Florida citizens and businesses. AvMed is one of only a few health plans in the United States that enjoys dual "excellent" accreditation status for both its Commercial and Medicare health plans from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), the nation's top health care quality evaluator. AvMed offers health coverage options to large and small employers in most major markets around the state; Medicare Advantage products in Broward and Miami-Dade counties; and Individual coverage in Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties. For more information about AvMed, visit www.avmed.org.

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