

WILDFIRE SMOKE FACTSHEET



Prepare for Fire Season

If you live in an area where the wildfire risk is high, take steps now to prepare for fire season. Being prepared for fire season is especially important for the health of children, older adults, and people with heart or lung disease.

Before a Wildfire

- **If any family member has heart or lung disease, including asthma**, check with your doctor about what you should do during smoke events. Have a plan to manage your condition.
- **Stock up** so you don't have to go out when it's smoky. Have several days of medications on hand. Buy groceries that do not need to be refrigerated or cooked because cooking can add to indoor air pollution.
- **Create a "clean room"** in your home. Choose a room with no fireplace and as few windows and doors as possible, such as a bedroom. Use a portable air cleaner in the room.
- **Buy a portable air cleaner** before there is a smoke event. Make sure it has high efficiency HEPA filters and it is the right size for the room.
- **Know how you will get alerts** and health warnings, including air quality reports, public service announcements (PSAs), and social media warning you about high fire risk or an active fire.
- **Ask** an air conditioning professional what kind of high efficiency filters to use in your home's system and how to close the fresh-air intake if your central air system or room air conditioner has one.
- **Have a supply of N95 respirators** and learn how to use them. They are sold at many home improvement stores and online.
- **Organize your important items** ahead of time, including financial and personal documents. Know your evacuation routes and where to go if you have to evacuate. Make sure to prepare your children, and consider your pets when making an evacuation plan.



During a Wildfire

- **Follow instructions from local officials** to keep yourself and your family safe.
- **Stay inside** with the doors and windows closed. Run your air conditioner with the fresh-air intake closed (“recirculate mode”) to keep smoke from getting indoors. Seek shelter elsewhere if you do not have an air conditioner and it is too warm to stay inside with the windows closed.
- **Follow your health care provider’s advice if you have heart or lung disease**, and follow your management plan if you have one. If your symptoms worsen, reduce your exposure to smoke and contact your provider.
- **Do not add to indoor air pollution.** Do not burn candles or use gas, propane, wood-burning stoves, fireplaces, or aerosol sprays. Do not fry or broil meat, smoke tobacco products, or vacuum. All of these can increase air pollution indoors.
- **Use a portable air cleaner** to reduce indoor air pollution. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions on where to put the air cleaner and when to replace the filters.
- **Reduce how much smoke you inhale.** If it looks or smells smoky outside, avoid strenuous activities such as mowing the lawn or going for a run. Wait until air quality is better before you are active outdoors.
- **Pay attention to local air quality reports and health warnings.** Smoke levels can vary a lot during the day, so you may have a chance to do errands and open up windows when air quality is better. Public service announcements give you important information such as changing conditions, cancelled events, or evacuation notices.
- **Do not rely on dust masks or bandanas** for protection from smoke. An N95 respirator can protect you if it fits snugly to your face and is worn properly. These are not recommended for children.
- **Reduce smoke in your vehicle** by closing the windows and vents and running the air conditioner in recirculate mode. Slow down when you drive in smoky conditions.

For more information:

- **Get air quality information:** Check your local news, the airnow.gov website, or your state air quality agency’s website.
- **Learn about home air cleaners:** <https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/guide-air-cleaners-home>
- **Find certified air cleaning devices:** <http://www.arb.ca.gov/research/indoor/aircleaners/certified.htm>
- **Learn how to use an N95 respirator mask:** <http://www.bepreparedcalifornia.ca.gov/Documents/Protect%20Your%20Lungs%20Respirator.pdf>
- **Learn more about wildfire smoke:** *How Smoke from Fires Can Affect Your Health:* <https://airnow.gov/index.cfm?action=smoke.index>

