

# WILDFIRE SMOKE PREPAREDNESS TIPS



**T**he recent unprecedented fires and dense smoke are the result of years of impacts brought on by climate change.

**The best public health strategy is to be aware that heavy smoke will be in our future and to prepare your home and your family for smoke events.**

When heavy, dense smoke blankets the region, there is no other public health solution that can be widely applied.



BAY AREA  
AIR QUALITY  
MANAGEMENT  
DISTRICT

## HOW TO PREPARE FOR WILDFIRE SMOKE



- Weatherize the home in preparation for wildfires by replacing or refurbishing old leaky windows and doors; use caulking to seal the openings.



- Consider purchasing a non-ozone producing air purifier (HEPA) to create a cleaner air room in the home or consider purchasing a MERV 13 or greater filter for your HVAC system to be used when experiencing a heavy smoke event.



- Consider upgrading to an HVAC system that allows for both heating and cooling and have the mechanism to switch to RECIRCULATE to prevent smoke from entering the space.



- Individuals with health conditions should talk to their physicians to develop a personal plan for smoke.

- Identify locations in your community that have cleaner filtered air spaces such as:



- indoor shopping malls
- local libraries
- cooling centers
- community centers
- civic centers
- local government buildings



- Make a plan to go to a cleaner air location if you are unable to seal your home or if dense smoke occurs during hot weather events.

## FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH HEALTH CONDITIONS



- Smoke can irritate the eyes and airways, causing cough, a dry scratchy throat and irritated sinuses. Stay hydrated.



- Elevated particulate matter in the air can trigger wheezing in those who suffer from asthma, emphysema, COPD or other respiratory conditions.



- Elderly persons, pregnant women, children and individuals with respiratory illnesses are particularly susceptible to elevated air pollution levels and should take extra precautions to avoid exposure.



- Those with heart or lung disease, older adults, pregnant women, and children should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion and either move or reschedule outdoor activities.



- Asthmatics should follow their asthma management plan.



- Individuals should contact their physician if they have cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms believed to be caused by the smoke. Concerned individuals should consult their physician for personalized recommendations.



# WHAT TO DO DURING A SMOKE EVENT



- Leave the affected area if possible, for the duration of the heavy smoke event.



- Staying indoors with windows and doors closed, where air quality is better, is the best way to protect your health.



- During high heat and heavy smoke events, keep indoor air cool or visit a cleaner air-cooling center.



- Set air conditioning units and car vent systems to recirculate to prevent outside air from moving inside.



- Avoid adding additional air pollution by curtailing activities such as wood burning, lawn mowing, leaf blowing, driving, barbecuing or other dust producing activities.



- Bandanas and typical surgical masks do nothing to protect against wildfire smoke particles.



- There is not clear evidence that N95 respirator use by the general public is beneficial to an individual's health during wildfire smoke air quality events, and there could be harms.

- If individuals desire a mask, only N-95 or N-100 respirator masks should be worn.

- Masks may not provide you with the protection needed.

- Masks, when worn properly can become uncomfortable and hot.

- A properly fitted N-95 respirator makes it difficult to breathe and is difficult to use for long periods of time.

- Taking a mask on and off can cause fine particulate matter to build up in the mask which the wearer will breathe when it is put back on the face.

- Wearing an ill-fitted mask can lead to false sense of security and lead to overexertion.



- Do not save and reuse N-95 masks.



- N-95s may be dangerous for certain persons with lung or heart conditions and may lead to:



- increased heart rate
- increased respiratory rate
- labored breathing



- Certified N95s are not available for children. Children should not wear these masks – they do not fit properly and can impede breathing.



The Air District is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the Bay Area.

[www.baaqmd.gov](http://www.baaqmd.gov)



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