

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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www.arb.ca.gov**Wildfire smoke is dangerous***Public should take precautions to reduce exposure*

SACRAMENTO - ARB is warning Californians enduring threats from wildfires to be aware of the dangers from wood smoke and minimize exposure.

Fire season is upon us and while the smoke from the southern California fires remains minimal, the expected lighter winds will reduce clearing of the air. Smoke from forest fires is a mix of very fine particles that can be dangerous depending on the amount of smoke and personal health.

Air quality and health officials are urging the public to stay informed about regional air pollution levels by watching the media or checking local air pollution officials' web pages. When the air is unhealthy take the following precautions:

- Stay indoors with windows and doors closed;
- Run air-conditioners on the "re-circulate" setting, if available. A small percentage of newer homes have ventilation systems that actively bring in outdoor air. These should be turned off or set to a "re-circulate" mode;
- Do not run swamp coolers or whole house fans;
- Minimize or stop outdoor activities, especially exercise, during smoky conditions; and,
- Those in a "high-risk health" group or those who cannot find adequate shelter from the smoke should move to an emergency shelter.

If you must be outside in a smoky area, individuals should consider wearing a mask called a "particulate respirator." These resemble common dust masks but are substantially more effective at removing the airborne small particles. Choose one with two straps and has NIOSH, and either N95 or P100 printed on it. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully. For more information on N-95 or P100 go to the California Department of Public Health web page [here](#). N-95 or P-100 respirators work best when sealed closely to the face. Beards defeat the needed seal.

CAUTION: It is harder to breathe with these masks. If you have heart or lung disease check with your doctor before using one.

If you must work, take frequent rests.

Do not use bandanas (wet or dry), paper masks, or tissues held over the mouth and nose. These are ineffective and will not protect your lungs from wildfire smoke.

The most effective way to reduce exposure and avoid the ill effects of smoke is to stay indoors. Eliminate outdoor activities while air quality is in the unhealthy range. Exposure and the ensuing health effects are dependent on the amount of time spent outside, level of exertion and air quality. Effects can be as mild as irritation of the eye, nose and throat, or headache; or as serious as triggered asthma episodes or added stress to weakened cardiovascular systems.

It is especially important for people with respiratory or heart disease to monitor their health. If their symptoms worsen they should immediately consult with their health care providers. Individuals with moderate or severe heart or respiratory disease should consider alternatives and stay away from areas with high smoke concentrations. Such individuals should evaluate whether evacuation might actually cause greater exposure than staying home and using the precautions described above.

Children and older individuals should be especially careful.

Those with pre-existing heart and lung problems should consider curtailing activities at the AQI level of Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups.

Even healthy people may experience some symptoms in smoky conditions.

Additionally, pets can also be impacted by unhealthy air and should be brought indoors if possible.

Making the decision to cancel or reschedule active outdoor events is difficult, but when smoke levels reach unhealthy levels coupled with very high temperatures, the prudent decision is to your health and that of others.

Public officials may take the precautions of closing schools and businesses, canceling public events and calling for evacuation. If you are evacuated, make sure to drive with the windows rolled up and the air conditioner set to re-circulate.

For current information about local smoke conditions, find your local air quality management group [here](#).

For current and forecast particulate matter AQI information click [here](#).

More information on how to protect yourself is available [here](#).

For a guide for public officials on wildfire smoke go [here](#).

The Air Resources Board is a department of the [California Environmental Protection Agency](#). ARB's mission is to promote and protect public health, welfare, and ecological resources through effective reduction of air pollutants while recognizing and considering effects on the economy. The ARB oversees all air pollution control efforts in California to attain and maintain health based air quality standards.

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