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Air District urges Bay Area to proactively prepare for smoke this wildfire season

Learn how to check local air quality, avoid exposure to polluted air and keep indoor air clean

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air District is encouraging residents to prepare for potential smoke impacts this summer to protect their health in the event of widespread unhealthy air quality.

“Wildfire season is becoming increasingly unpredictable, so it’s important for Bay Area residents to take steps now to protect their health from smoke,” said Dr. Philip Fine, executive officer of the Air District. “By preparing ahead of time, we can all reduce our exposure and stay healthier when smoke affects our region.”

Wildfire smoke poses a serious health risk, especially during prolonged events. The best way for Bay Area residents to protect their health from smoke is to remain indoors with windows and doors closed, if temperatures allow. Residents can further reduce their exposure to high levels of air pollution by following these tips:

1. Stay informed on local air quality conditions. Sign up for [Air Quality Incident Notifications](#) and [Spare the Air Alerts](#) to get notified when wildfire smoke impacts the Bay Area. Real-time smoke pollution levels are available on the U.S. EPA’s [Fire and Smoke Map](#).
2. During high heat and heavy smoke, keep indoor air cool or visit a [Clean Air Center](#).
3. [Weatherize the home](#) by replacing or fixing old, leaky windows and doors; use caulking to seal cracks and holes to prevent smoke from entering the space.
4. Consider using a nonozone producing air purifier to create a cleaner air room in the home or a MERV 13 or greater filter for heating and cooling systems.
5. Set car ventilation systems to recirculate to prevent outside air from moving inside.

6. Avoid adding additional air pollution by curtailing activities such as wood burning, lawn mowing, leaf blowing, driving, barbecuing or other dust-producing activities.
7. For those who must be outside, consider wearing a properly fitted N95 mask. Bandanas and typical surgical masks do little to protect against smoke particles.

Smoke can irritate the eyes and airways, causing coughing, a scratchy throat and irritated sinuses. Elevated particulate matter in the air can trigger wheezing in those who suffer from asthma, emphysema or COPD. Pregnant people, the elderly, children and individuals with heart or lung disease are particularly susceptible to elevated air pollution levels and should take extra precautions to avoid exposure.

For more information on preparing for and responding to smoke events, visit www.baaqmd.gov/wildfiresafety.

The Bay Area Air District is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the nine-county Bay Area. Connect with the Air District via [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

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