



**MENDOCINO COUNTY
AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
AND
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY**



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For Immediate Release

**Public Health Officer and Air Quality
Media Advisory**

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**Health Recommendations to Reduce the Impact From
Wildfire Smoke**

Health Effects of Smoke

Smoke is made up of a complex mixture of gases and fine particles produced when wood and other organic matter burn. The biggest health threat from smoke comes from fine particles. These microscopic particles can get into your eyes and respiratory system, where they can cause health problems such as burning eyes, runny nose, and illnesses such as bronchitis. Fine particles also can aggravate chronic heart and lung diseases – and even are linked to premature deaths in people with these conditions. If you have heart or lung disease, such as congestive heart failure, angina, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, emphysema or asthma, you may experience health effects earlier and at lower smoke levels than healthy people.

Older adults are more likely to be affected by smoke, possibly because they are more likely to have heart or lung diseases than younger people. Children also are more susceptible to smoke for several reasons: their respiratory systems are still developing; they breathe more air (and air pollution) per pound of body weight than

adults; and they're more likely to be active outdoors. (Information provided by U.S. EPA)

How to reduce the impact of smoke on your health

Stay indoors

- Indoor levels of smoke in a well sealed home are roughly 1/3 the levels in outdoor air.
- Even a poorly sealed home may have levels 30% less than those in outdoor air.
- If you have air conditioning run it on recirculation mode (do not draw in outside air).
- It may also help to run your heater on “fan only” mode which will allow the filter to help clean the air.

Reduce Activity

- Outdoor exercise is strongly not recommended at this time.
- Reducing physical activity, even indoors, is an effective way to reduce health impacts. While exercising people can breathe as much as 10-20 times more than a “resting level.”

Reduce other sources of pollution

- Cooking, smoking, vacuuming, wood stoves and other activities can generate additional air pollution inside your home – try to minimize or eliminate the use of these devices until the air pollution levels are reduced.

Room Air Cleaners

- Room air cleaners can be effective; however some models generate ozone which can actually negatively impact indoor air quality. Do not use models that emit Ozone.
- Look for HEPA models with the highest CADR (clean air delivery rate).
- A room air cleaner will not help clean your entire house- but it can help create a “clean space,” for sleeping, resting and recovering.

Humidifiers

- Humidifiers will not significantly reduce air pollution, but they may reduce eye and nose irritation.

Inside your car

- Operate your car's air conditioning in recirculation mode (sometimes called "Max A/C"). This will reduce the pollution levels inside your car. If it gets too cold regulate the temperature to a warmer setting, but leave the A/C in recirculation mode.
- If you must work outside use your car as a "clean air shelter" to take breaks from the smoke (normally we ask you don't idle your car, but in this case it is ok).

Masks

- It is best not to be outside – If you must be outside you can use a mask rated N-95 or higher. (P-95 or R-95 is acceptable).
- Standard paper dust masks are not effective in reducing smoke particles. To be effective you must use a mask rated N-95 or higher. (P-95 or R-95 is acceptable).
- Masks can cause stress on unhealthy individuals because they make breathing harder – check with your doctor to make sure you are healthy enough to wear respiratory protection.
- Masks must be air tight and properly fitted to work – please always read the instructions that came with the mask. The mask must seal correctly on your face. Those with facial hair are unlikely to get a good seal.

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