



Yakima Health District

Media Release

For immediate release: July 14, 2021

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Wildfire Season and Air Quality: Staying Informed and Prepared

Yakima, WA- As wildfire season begins, it may create unhealthy air quality in our area. It is crucial individuals stay informed on the air quality conditions and take additional steps to keep themselves and their family members safe from smoke. Washington State Department of Ecology's [Air Quality Monitoring website](#) has a map of air quality statewide. The map uses [color-coded categories](#) to report when air quality is good, moderate or unhealthy.

Breathing in wildfire smoke can result in minor to serious health effects. Symptoms include sore throat, headaches, burning eyes, coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath and chest pain. Wildfire smoke can affect anyone, especially sensitive groups. People at risk for problems include children younger than 18 and adults older than 65, people with heart and lung diseases, people with respiratory illnesses and colds, people who have had a stroke, pregnant women and people who smoke.

Reduce Exposure to Smoke

In addition to staying indoor, these additional steps can keep individuals and their families safe from the smoke:

- Close windows and doors when it is smoky outside.
- Improve the filtration of the home's indoor air:
 - Upgrade home HVAC system filtration to a MERV 13 filter or
 - buy a HEPA portable air cleaner.
- Do not add to indoor air pollution. Avoid burning candles or incense, using essential oil diffusers, smoking inside, or vacuuming.
- Turn the air conditioner in your home and vehicle to recirculate to avoid bringing smoky outdoor air inside.
- Seek indoor shelter or public places with monitored air quality if you cannot improve the quality of air in your home.
- If you cannot keep your home cool on hot, smoky days, utilize public places with air conditioning.
- Choose alternatives to outdoor family activities. If the air quality is unhealthy, choose indoor exercise activities to limit time outdoors. Check air quality conditions before you travel or attend outdoor events.
- Use and properly wear a respiratory mask labeled N95 or N100, if appropriate. People who must be outside for extended periods of time in smoky air may benefit from wearing one of these masks, if worn correctly. These masks are not recommended for children or people with beards.



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- Relocate if the air quality is hazardous.

Quote

“It is best to stay informed and prepared during wildfire season. Please check the air quality in your area and take additional steps to keep yourself and your family safe from the smoke. Additionally, utilize open public spaces with air conditioning, such as the mall or public libraries if you need shelter from the heat.” -Nathan Johnson, Local Emergency Response Coordinator, Yakima Health District

Additional Information

[Washington Air Quality Advisory](#)

[Washington State Department of Health: Smoke from Fires](#)

[Infographic on Air Quality Conditions](#)

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