

AIR QUALITY DURING WILDFIRES

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

If you are healthy, you're usually not at a major risk from short-term exposures to smoke from wildfires. Still, it's a good idea to avoid breathing smoke if you can help it. It may, however, pose a health danger to certain individuals. Among those that can be most affected are children. They are more likely to be affected because their airways are still developing and because they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults. Children are also more likely to be active outdoors. Others at risk include people with asthma or other heart and respiratory conditions.

It is important to keep in mind that the air quality may vary in different parts of the county. Use common sense. If it looks smoky outside, it's probably not a good time for students to be outdoors.

Here are some recommendations that should support the decisions you may need to make during periods of poor air quality due to wildland fires.

- If there is constant visible ash and a strong smell of smoke on and around the campus, outdoor activities should be avoided. This includes outdoor recess periods and outdoor athletic events.
- If there are localized episodes of visible ash or the smell of smoke. Outdoor activities should be avoided for sensitive individuals and time spent outdoors should be minimized for all others. Sensitive individuals include children under the age of seven and those with asthma or other heart/lung conditions, the elderly and pregnant women.
- When indoors keep the windows and doors closed and use the air conditioner in the recirculate mode if a choice of air sources is available.
- Make sure that staff and students drink plenty of water. This helps the body filter out potentially harmful particles in the smoke.
- Look for signs of adverse health affects which may include coughing, scratchy throat, irritated sinuses, shortness of breath, chest pain, stinging eyes, headaches, runny nose, or wheezing.
- Pay attention to air quality reports. Listen and watch for news or health warnings about smoke. For your local Air Quality Index* you may call the South Coast Air Quality Management District at (800) 288-7664 (closed Monday's).
- Follow the recommendations of the school district and local authorities to determine the possible need for school closures.
- Information and updates can be found on the following websites:
www.epa.gov
www.airnow.gov
www.aqmd.gov/smog/

* Air Quality Index (AQI)

The purpose of the AQI is to help you understand what local air quality means to your health. To make it easier to understand, the AQI is divided into six categories:

Air Quality Index (AQI) Values	Levels of Health Concern	Colors
<i>When the AQI is in this range:</i>	<i>...air quality conditions are:</i>	<i>...as symbolized by this color:</i>
0 to 50	Good	Green
51 to 100	Moderate	Yellow
101 to 150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	Orange
151 to 200	Unhealthy	Red
201 to 300	Very Unhealthy	Purple
301 to 500	Hazardous	Maroon

Each category corresponds to a different level of health concern. The six levels of health concern and what they mean are:

- **"Good"** The AQI value for your community is between 0 and 50. Air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
- **"Moderate"** The AQI for your community is between 51 and 100. Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people. For example, people who are unusually sensitive to ozone may experience respiratory symptoms.
- **"Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups"** When AQI values are between 101 and 150, members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. This means they are likely to be affected at lower levels than the general public. For example, people with lung disease are at greater risk from exposure to ozone, while people with either lung disease or heart disease are at greater risk from exposure to particle pollution. The general public is not likely to be affected when the AQI is in this range.
- **"Unhealthy"** Everyone may begin to experience health effects when AQI values are between 151 and 200. Members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
- **"Very Unhealthy"** AQI values between 201 and 300 trigger a health alert, meaning everyone may experience more serious health effects.
- **"Hazardous"** AQI values over 300 trigger health warnings of emergency conditions. The entire population is more likely to be affected.