



Smoke Dangers

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Emergency Preparedness—Month 9 SMOKE DANGERS

How to Protect Your Family from the Health Effects of Smoke

Pay attention to local air quality reports and stay alert to any news coverage or health warnings related to smoke.

Use common sense. If it looks smoky outside, it's probably not a good time to mow the lawn or go for a run. And it's probably not a good time for your children to play outdoors.

If you are advised to stay indoors, take steps to keep indoor air as clean as possible. Keep your windows and doors closed — unless it's extremely hot outside.

Check the Air Quality Index (AQI) forecast for your area. The links to this information are on the left menu bar of the this page. The AQI, based on data from local air quality monitors, tells you about the daily air quality in your area and recommends precautions you can take to protect your health. As smoke gets worse, the concentration of particles in the air changes — and so do the steps you should take to protect yourself.

Run your air conditioner, if you have one. Keep the fresh air intake closed and the filter clean to prevent bringing additional smoke inside. Note: If you don't have an air conditioner, staying inside with the windows closed may be dangerous in extremely hot weather. In these cases, seek alternative shelter.

Help keep particle levels inside lower. When smoke levels are high, try to avoid using anything that burns, such as wood fireplaces, gas logs, gas stoves — and even candles! Don't vacuum. That stirs up particles already inside your home. And don't smoke. That puts even more pollution in your lungs, and in the lungs of people around you. If you have asthma or other lung disease, make sure you follow

your doctor's directions about taking your medicines and following your asthma management plan. Call your doctor if your symptoms worsen.

If you have heart or lung disease, if you are an older adult, or if you have children, talk with your doctor about whether and when you should leave the area. When smoke is heavy for a prolonged period of time, fine particles can build up indoors even though you may not be able to see them.



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



Air Quality Index

According to the El Dorado County [Air Quality Management District](#), the following index can help people assess the air quality based on the visibility in their area. To assess visibility:

- ◆ Face away from the sun. Determine visibility range by looking for targets that are at known distances (miles).
- ◆ The visible range is the point where even high-contrast objects disappear.
- ◆ After determining visibility in miles use the following Wildfire Smoke Visibility Index to assess air quality.

Visibility Range	Health Category	Health Effects
10+ miles	Good	None
5 - 10 miles	Moderate	Usually sensitive people should consider reducing prolonged or heavy exertion.
3 - 5 miles	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	Sensitive people should reduce prolonged or heavy exertion.
1.5 - 2.5 miles	Unhealthy	Sensitive people should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged or heavy exertion.
1 – 1.25 miles	Very Unhealthy	Sensitive people should avoid all physical activity outdoors. Everyone else should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion.
< 0.75 miles	Hazardous	Sensitive people should remain indoors and keep activity levels low. Everyone else should avoid all physical activity outdoors.



City of South Lake Tahoe Emergency Preparation

As part of the City's initiative to increase communications, we are offering a 12 part monthly series highlighting emergency preparedness. Use these tools to prepare yourself for an emergency event. www.cityofslt.us/emergency