

Protect Yourself from Smoke during Wildfires

During fire season, the air we breathe can become impacted by wildfire smoke.

Fine particles in smoke can cause health problems, especially for children, older people and those with respiratory conditions.

Residents who see or smell smoke should consider taking these precautionary measures:

- Healthy people should delay strenuous exercise.
- Children and elderly people should consider avoiding outdoor activities, particularly prolonged outdoor exertion.
- People with health-related illnesses, particularly respiratory problems, should remain indoors.
- Keep windows and doors closed as much as possible. Use the recycle or re-circulate mode on the air conditioner in your home or car.
- Avoid the use of non-HEPA paper face mask filters which are not capable of filtering extra fine particles.
- Keep airways moist by drinking lots of water. Breathing through a warm, wet washcloth can also help relieve dryness.
- The same particles in smoke that cause problems for people may cause some problems for animals. It is recommended that you limit the outdoor physical activity of your pets and working livestock, such as horses, in smoky conditions.
- Wildlife may be confused or startled by smoky conditions. Please be cautious, as some animals may be moving about at unusual times of the day.

Exposure to smoke can cause coughing, watery and itchy eyes, difficulty breathing, and other problems. Persons experiencing questionable or severe symptoms from smoke exposure should seek professional medical advice and treatment.

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.