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Avoid Breathing Wildfire Smoke

HEALTH ADVISORY

November 9, 2018

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SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CA – The County of Santa Clara Public Health Department is advising residents to take precautions due to visible smoke in the air. Wildfires in California are causing air pollution throughout the Bay Area.

If you smell smoke, protect your health by avoiding exposure. If possible, stay inside with windows and doors closed until smoke levels subside. Set air conditioning units and car vent systems to re-circulate to prevent outside air from moving inside. Smoke can irritate the eyes and airways, causing coughing, a dry scratchy throat and irritated sinuses. Elevated particulate matter in the air can trigger wheezing in those who suffer from respiratory conditions, such as asthma or emphysema/COPD. It is recommended that parents and school administrators [check air quality readings](#) before allowing children to practice outdoor sports while air quality is unhealthy.

Elderly persons, children and individuals with respiratory illnesses are particularly susceptible to elevated air pollution levels and should take extra precautions to avoid exposure.

When air quality is Yellow, or Moderate, air quality is acceptable. However, there may be a risk for some people, particularly those who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.

Due to the active wildfires and changing wind patterns, air quality could be variable and unpredictable. Air quality may improve at times or get worse, very quickly. Check the

latest air quality data for your area by searching your location at airnow.gov.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District has issued a Winter Spare the Air Alert asking residents to avoid adding additional air pollution activities such as lawn mowing, leaf blowing, driving, and barbecuing. Burning wood, firelogs, pellets, or any other solid fuels in your fireplace, woodstove, or other wood-burning device is illegal during a Winter Spare the Air Alert.

Residents may have questions about using masks to help with protection from wildfire smoke. The most important thing you can do is to stay indoors as much as possible when you smell or see smoke in the air. If you work outdoors or prolonged outdoor activity is unavoidable, and there is heavy smoke, certain masks (for example, properly fitted N-95 masks) can protect against harmful exposure. Masks such as the N-95 are not effective for untrained users and may be more harmful than helpful for people with lung or heart conditions. Employees should work with their employers for direction on when/how to use N-95 masks. Bandanas and typical surgical masks DO NOT protect against wildfire smoke particles.

More Information:

[Real time air quality](#) from United States Environmental Protection Agency Air Now [Wildfire Safety Tips](#) are available from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

[Information on masks](#) for those who expect significant exposure to smoke from the California Department of Public Health

Air quality forecasts and health advisories from state [Bay Area Air Quality Management District](#)

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