



MADERA COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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HEALTH ADVISORY

Currently there are at least three wildfires in the San Joaquin Valley. The following information will help you stay healthy during the wildfire season.

Wildfire Air Quality & Health

During a wildfire, if you can see or smell smoke, it is recommended that you avoid outdoor physical activities. If visibility is decreased in your neighborhood to less than five miles, smoke has reached levels that are unhealthy.

Children, Elderly, & People with Respiratory Conditions

If you can see or smell smoke, children, elderly, pregnant women, and people with pre-existing respiratory conditions should stay inside with the windows and doors closed. If it is hot outside, run an air conditioner if you have one, but keep the fresh-air intake closed and the filter clean to prevent outdoor smoke from getting inside. If you do not have an air conditioner and it is too warm to stay inside with the windows closed, seek shelter elsewhere. Watch for signs of heat exhaustion, including fatigue, nausea, headache, and vomiting, and contact your doctor immediately if these occur.

Follow your doctor's advice about medicines and about your respiratory management plan if you have asthma or another lung disease. Call your doctor if your symptoms worsen.

Summer & Sports Camps

Children are more likely to be affected by health threats from smoke because their airways are still developing and because they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults. Children also are more likely to be active outdoors. Avoid outdoor camp activities if you can see or smell smoke.

Healthy Individuals

When smoke levels are high, even healthy people may experience coughing, a scratchy throat, irritated sinuses, shortness of breath, chest pain, headaches, stinging eyes, and a runny nose. If you can see or smell smoke, you should limit outdoor physical activities and stay indoors if at all possible.

Wildfire smoke contains pollutants that can be harmful to health. Particles from smoke tend to be very small and can therefore be inhaled into the deepest recesses of the lung and may represent a greater health concern than larger particles. Even in healthy people, this can cause temporary reductions in lung function and pulmonary inflammation. Particulate matter can also affect the body's immune system.

Precautions

- Check on elderly friends and relatives.
- Do not rely on paper dust masks found at hardware stores. These masks are not designed to block the small particles generated by wildfire smoke. Keep windows and doors closed.
- If you have an air conditioner, run it, but make sure that the fresh air intake vent is closed and the filter is clean. If not, turn the system off.
- Evaporative cooling systems can also pull in air from the outside. Consider using a portable evaporative cooler within your house to avoid pulling air pollution into your house.
- If these remedies are not sufficient, you may want to relocate to another location away from the smoke.

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