



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **STAYING HEALTHY DURING POOR AIR QUALITY DUE TO SMOKE**

*Take Precautions to Protect Your Health from Wildfire Smoke*

STOCKTON, CA (July 26, 2018) - Smoke from multiple wildfires in the region are causing high levels of air pollution throughout San Joaquin County. Due to active wildfires and changing wind patterns, air quality could be impacted for many days to come and will be variable and unpredictable. Air quality may improve at times or get worse, very quickly.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is monitoring the air quality. Even though the health risk might be rated as low, if you see or smell smoke, you are likely being impacted by it.

Particles in the smoke can cause burning eyes, runny nose, coughing, scratchy throat, irritated sinuses and headaches. Wildfires need not be nearby for these symptoms to occur; with the proper weather conditions we can have smoke from fires far away.

To reduce or eliminate breathing problems or other symptoms, the San Joaquin County Public Health Officer, Dr. Kismet Baldwin urges ALL residents and visitors to:

### **1. Know if you or a family member is at risk**

- If you have heart or lung disease, such as congestive heart failure, angina, COPD, emphysema or asthma, you are at higher risk of having health problems from smoke.
- 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 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.

### **2. Take precautions to protect your health and that of your family**

- If you see or smell smoke in your immediate area, stay indoors, if possible, with windows and doors closed and air conditioning units on recirculate to avoid drawing outside air into buildings.
- Keep air conditioning in the home and in the car on "re-circulating" air so that smoke is not drawn in from the outside.

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- If your home becomes too hot, consider leaving your home and visiting an indoor mall, library, or a friend or relative's house that has air conditioning.
- Those with heart or lung disease, older adults, pregnant women, and children should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion and either move or reschedule outdoor activities. All others should also reduce prolonged or heavy exertion and take breaks during outdoor activity.
- It is recommended that parents and school administrators check air quality readings before allowing children outdoors while air quality is unhealthy.
- Make sure family members with heart disease or lung problems such as asthma, bronchitis or emphysema, are following their doctor's advice about medicines and about their respiratory management plan. Call the doctor if your symptoms worsen.
- Because of the serious air quality conditions in parts of San Joaquin County, residents should avoid adding additional air pollution by curtailing air polluting activities such as wood burning, lawn mowing and leaf blowing, driving, and barbecuing.
- For more information about protecting yourself from wildfire smoke, see the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention webpage about wildfire smoke](#)

Along with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, San Joaquin County Public Health Services is monitoring the fire situation and air quality conditions and will inform residents if any additional action needs to be taken.

**Additional information may be found at:**

- San Joaquin County Public Health Services, <http://www.sjcphs.org>
- San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, <http://www.valleyair.org/Home.htm>
- Healthy Air Living, <http://www.healthyairliving.com>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/features/wildfires/index.html>

Attachment: Wildfire Smoke Fact Sheet, pdf

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## **WILDFIRE SMOKE FACT SHEET**

### ***Health Threat from Wildfire Smoke***

Smoke from wildfires is a mixture of gases and fine particles from burning trees and other plant materials. Smoke can hurt your eyes, irritate your respiratory system and worsen chronic heart and lung diseases.

### ***How to tell if smoke is affecting you***

Smoke can cause:

- Coughing
- A scratchy throat
- Irritated sinuses
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Headaches
- Stinging eyes
- A runny nose

If you have heart or lung disease, smoke might make your symptoms worse. People who have heart disease might experience:

- Chest pain
- Rapid heartbeat
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue

Smoke may worsen symptoms for people who have pre-existing respiratory conditions, such as respiratory allergies, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), in the following ways:

- Inability to breathe normally
- Cough with or without mucus
- Chest discomfort
- Wheezing and shortness of breath

When smoke levels are high enough, even healthy people may experience some of these symptoms.

### ***Know whether you are at risk***

Those at risk include:

- If you have heart or lung disease, such as congestive heart failure, angina, COPD, emphysema, or asthma, you are at higher risk of having health problems 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 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.

### ***Protect yourself***

- Stay inside with windows and doors shut.
- Use the recycle or re-circulate mode on the air conditioner in your home or car.
- If you do not have an air conditioner and if it is too warm to stay inside with the windows closed, seek shelter elsewhere.
- Avoid cooking and vacuuming, which can increase pollutants indoors.
- Avoid physical exertion.
- Asthmatics should follow their asthma management plan.
- Keep at least a five-day supply of medication on hand.
- Contact your doctor if you have symptoms such as chest pain, chest tightness, shortness of breath, or severe fatigue. This is important not only for people with chronic lung or heart disease, but also for individuals who have not been previously diagnosed with such illnesses. Smoke can “unmask” or produce symptoms of such diseases.
- Keep airways moist by drinking lots of water. Breathing through a warm, wet washcloth can also help relieve dryness.