



SACRAMENTO METROPOLITAN



Date: August 21, 2020

Contacts: Brenda Bongiorno (916) 874-7798 (Health questions)
Jamie Arno (916) 874-4888 (Air quality questions)

Wildfire Smoke Pollution Impacts Expected to Extend Through Tuesday

Staying indoors is the best way to protect against exposure to smoke

The Sacramento region will likely continue to experience significant smoke particle pollution impacts from wildfires burning throughout Northern California at least through Tuesday. Sacramento County is expected to reach particulate matter (PM) pollution levels of Unhealthy (red) during the next few days on the Air Quality Index and reach Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (orange) Monday and Tuesday. It is likely that the highest pollution levels will occur during the afternoon, evening and early morning hours as wildfire smoke up high mixes down to the surface. In addition, there may be times when levels reach Very Unhealthy (purple). A warming trend and Fire Weather Watch through Tuesday remain concerns.

Since air pollution levels are significantly above health-based standards, the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (AirQuality.org), in conjunction with Sacramento County Public Health, is **advising residents to stay indoors whenever possible, as this is the most effective way to reduce exposure.**

Although current smoke levels regionally are approximately 50 percent lower than the peak pollution experienced during the devastating Camp fire in 2018, it's important to recognize particle pollution is still very high right now and wildfire smoke can affect anyone, but especially sensitive groups. Please be very cautious, particularly when outdoors for work or other reasons. People with heart and lung disease, older adults and children are at a greater risk and especially vulnerable. If you see or smell smoke, take the following actions:

- Stay indoors with doors and windows closed as much as possible
- Use your air conditioner set to re-circulating indoor air mode
- Go outside only if you must, and minimize outdoor activities if you see or smell smoke
- Contact your doctor if you have symptoms of cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms you believe to be caused by smoke
- Children, the elderly and people with respiratory or heart conditions should be particularly careful to avoid exposure
- Those with heart disease should especially limit their smoke exposure due to increased risk of heart attacks
- If you have asthma, follow your asthma management plan

Staying indoors is recommended until conditions change. Cloth and surgical masks are not necessarily effective for preventing breathing in PM fire pollution. In addition, at this time, available N-95 respirators are needed for healthcare frontline personnel fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. If you currently have an N-95 respirator and

choose to use it, it needs to be properly fitted to be effective and not cause additional health problems. In addition, these respirators are not made for children.

During this period of elevated air particle pollution, employers are encouraged to allow teleworking as much as possible, to limit employees' exposure during commutes and other work travel. As a reminder, California OSHA recently adopted a new regulation pertaining to N-95 respirator usage for outdoor workers during wildfire events. Employers subject to this regulation are required to provide these respirators to workers for voluntary use when AQI PM readings are greater than 151 and N-95 respirators are mandatory for employees to use when AQI (PM) readings are greater than 500. For reference, 151-200 is Unhealthy/red, 201-300 is Very Unhealthy/purple, and higher than 301 is Hazardous/maroon.

For current conditions visit <http://www.sparetheair.com/aqirealtime.cfm> or download the Sacramento Region Air Quality app and learn about other ways you can [prepare for the smoke during the wild fire season](#).