

Protecting Your Home Air from Wildfire Smoke



Record-setting wildfires have been raging with little or no end in sight. Although drought stricken regions have been most susceptible to forest fires, these fires have been popping up all over the country. A dry warm weather pattern has been active for months contributing to the persistence of fires. Smoke from these fires can travel hundreds of miles and pose a serious hazard to your health.

Wildfire smoke is a combination of gases and fine particles from burning trees and other plant materials. Exposure to wildfire smoke can cause eye irritation, respiratory distress, and exacerbate symptoms from asthma or heart and lung diseases.

What can you do to protect your home air quality when there is smoke present in your area?

#1 Pay attention to the news and local smoke warnings

Stay informed. It is extremely important to be aware of deteriorating air conditions and how the direction of the wind is affecting smoke traveling from wildfires. Even if you reside hundreds of miles away from a forest fire your air quality may not be at a healthy level. Winds can shift and fires can grow rapidly. Many major U.S. cities have been adversely affected this summer by smoke traveling from wildfires. The U.S. government's weather website www.airnow.gov provides a daily air quality forecast and a smoke forecast. Use this as a resource to stay informed about the outdoor air quality in your area.

#2 Keep your home airtight when smoke is present

While letting fresh air in is usually a great way to improve indoor air quality, prevent outdoor air from entering into your home when smoke is present in the atmosphere. Keep windows shut, run your air conditioning during summer months but

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close the fresh air intake to limit outdoor smoke, and turn fans on to circulate air. Keep air filters clean or replace them frequently. Limit your exposure to the outdoor air and change your clothing as soon as you return indoors.

#3 Take steps to improve your indoor air quality

Houseplants help purify indoor air by emitting oxygen and absorbing carbon dioxide. Purchase several houseplants and place them throughout your home. Protect your indoor air from further pollution. Do not burn candles or allow smoking indoors. Limit the use of fireplaces and gas stoves.