



# HEALTH ADVISORY: Wildfire Smoke INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES FOR OUTDOOR ACTIVITY Lane County Public Health Department August 7, 2017

## Preventing Wildfire Smoke Inhalation

Multiple forest fires across the region continue to affect air quality in Lane County. Forecasts for continued hot, dry, and unstable weather may result in heightened fire activity and **continued smoke production over the next several days**. Wildfires affect air quality, which may have important health implications for many people. While most persons can protect themselves from a day or two of poor air quality, when poor air quality persists for many days health risks increase significantly. Certain people (the elderly, infants, and those with chronic heart or lung diseases such as asthma) may be particularly sensitive to declines in air quality. Poor air quality conditions are a health threat and should be avoided by all residents in smoky communities. Remember, local smoke levels can rise and fall rapidly depending on weather factors, including wind direction.

Lane County health officials are providing the following information to help local providers and others proactively advise people in order to avoid illness from wildfire smoke inhalation:

1. Be aware of smoke concentrations in your area. Fine particulate matter (particle size <2.5 microns, or "PM<sub>2.5</sub>" ) is a particular concern. Exposure to elevated levels of PM<sub>2.5</sub> increase the risk of acute cardiac and pulmonary events in people with these conditions.
  - If PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels increase for a day or two due to wildfires, people with increased sensitivity to wildfire smoke can often protect themselves by staying indoors, away from smoke
  - Visit the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency website for hourly measurements on the Air Quality Index for our area at: <http://www.lrapa.org/>
2. Avoid outdoor exertion during such conditions. Avoid strenuous outdoor activity including sports practice, work and recreation.
  - For guidance on WHEN TO CANCEL OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES: Please refer to the attached table from the Oregon Health Authority
3. Stay hydrated- drinking lots of water can keep airways moist which may help reduce symptoms of respiratory irritation such as scratchy throat, runny nose and coughing.
4. Try to avoid driving in smoky areas. If you do need to drive in these areas, keep your windows rolled up and vents closed. If you need air conditioning, make sure you set your system on "re-circulate" to avoid bringing smoke into your car.
5. Avoid smoke by staying indoors, closing all windows and doors and use a filter in your heating/cooling system that removes very fine particulate matter.
6. For persons with concerning heart and lung conditions, please consider the following:
  - Review your breathing management plan with your healthcare provider
  - Assess medications and ensure enough are available for an extended poor air quality event
  - Review your respiratory emergency plan, including key contacts and phone numbers
  - Communicate with healthcare providers as necessary (e.g., daily peak flow measurements)
  - If your community experiences sustained elevations of PM<sub>2.5</sub>, public health may issue health advisories suggesting that people with these conditions consider leaving the area until air quality improves.

7. Visibility Scale: In addition to the AQI, you can use your own observations to determine the air conditions in your area. To do a visual inspection:
- Go outside
  - Face away from the sun
  - Determine the limit of your visible range by looking at objects at known distances (miles). Visible range is the point at which even high contrast objects totally disappear.

**Other helpful links:**

[Oregon Smoke blog](#), for the latest on fires and air quality across the state.

[Oregon Health Authority](#): fact sheets, FAQ's and more about the health threats from wildfire smoke.



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