

Wildfire Smoke Poses Health and Safety Risks



KNOW THE RISKS



In Canada, wildfires are common in forested and grassland regions from as early as March until September. They can cause extensive damage, put lives in danger, and smoke particles can travel over long

distances, affecting air quality and visibility in regions far from the fires themselves.

Individuals living in wildfire-prone areas should stay informed about local air quality conditions and follow guidance from local authorities regarding evacuation orders, air quality alerts, and health precautions during wildfire events.

Impacts of Wildfire Smoke

- **Air Quality:** Wildfire smoke can decrease air quality. The smoke can contain pollutants such as fine particulate matter, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds.
- **Health Effects:** Short-term exposure to smoke can cause coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, headache and irritation of the respiratory system. Long-term exposure may increase the risk of respiratory infections, bronchitis and asthma attacks.
- **Visibility:** Smoke from wildfires can significantly reduce visibility, making it challenging to navigate roads, airports and other transportation systems.
- **Evacuation and Displacement:** In severe conditions, communities may need to be evacuated. This can lead to temporary displacement and impacts on public health, infrastructure and resources.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Check local air quality reports.** Stay alert for news or health warnings about smoke.
- **Stay indoors.** This is most effective in buildings with HVAC systems that limit outdoor air from getting inside.
- **Wear a mask outdoors.** Use a respirator with an N95 or P100 filtration. As a component of a respiratory protection program, workers must be fit tested.
- **Create a clean air sanctuary inside.** Keep windows closed and seal off any openings to the outside. When using an air-conditioner, set it to re-circulate, if so equipped.

Resources

Air quality information:

- [Environment Canada | Weather Information](#)
- [FireSmoke Canada | Smoke Forecast](#)
- [Wildfire Smoke: A Guide for Public Health Officials](#)

Status/location of wildfires:

- [Alberta Wildfire](#)
- [British Columbia Wildfire Service](#)
- [Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency | Wildfire Status](#)

Develop an emergency plan and kit:

- [Government of Canada | Wildfires](#)