SMOKE READY COMMUNITIES

Smoke has become an increasing problem for communities.

According to a 2023 article in the journal *Nature*, wildfire smoke has eroded the gains in air quality from the Clean Air Act in many US states since at least 2016. (1.) Smoke can spread long distances from the source, so even communities with low risk of wildfire need to take steps to prepare for smoke risks. The following resources can serve as a starting point.

AIR QUALITY TRACKING TOOLS

Knowing air quality numbers is important. Negative health impacts from smoke come from the tiny particles trapped in our lungs. "PM 2.5" stands for **p**articulate **m**atter less than **2.5** microns in diameter. Some air quality tracking tools monitor multiple pollutants, so always verify the tool is set to PM 2.5.

Washington State's Air Monitoring Network
enviwa.ecology.wa.gov/home/map

U.S. Air Quality Index
airnow.gov

Purple Air: hyper-local, real-time data
map.purpleair.com

Be Smoke Ready: Know the colors of the Air Quality Index (AQI)

ENGLISH: youtu.be/XbWLVG9uQKA
SPANISH: youtu.be/YEV6ajw7x-w

Air Quality Index	*What Should I Do?*
Good 0–50	It's a great day to be active outside and a good time to make a plan if worse air quality is in the forecast.
Moderate 51–100	Some people are especially sensitive to lower levels of particle pollution and should reduce exposure. For example, limit time outside and avoid strenuous outdoor activity. All sensitive groups should watch for symptoms.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups 101–150	Sensitive groups should take steps to reduce exposure. Limit time outside, avoid strenuous outdoor activity, and follow tips for cleaner indoor air. Everyone should watch for symptoms as a sign to reduce exposure.
Unhealthy 151–200	Everyone should reduce exposure. Limit time outside, avoid strenuous outdoor activity, and follow tips for cleaner indoor air.
Very Unhealthy 201–300	Everyone should reduce exposure. Stay inside and filter indoor air to keep it cleaner. Go elsewhere for cleaner air, if needed.
Hazardous >300	Everyone should reduce exposure. Stay inside and filter indoor air to keep it cleaner. Go elsewhere for cleaner air, if needed.

1. Burke, M., Childs, M.L., de la Cuesta, B. et al. The contribution of wildfire to PM2.5 trends in the USA. Nature 622, 761–766 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-023-06522-6

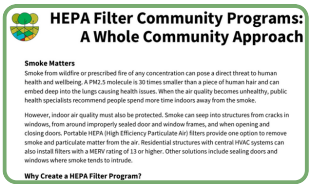
TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT HUMAN HEALTH IN YOUR COMMUNITY

These resources can help you design, implement or improve an existing program to build smoke ready communities in your area.

WAFAC Toolkit: Smoke Ready Communities

Video series, webinars, facilitator's agenda, and presentation templates in English and Spanish on how smoke can impact health, what you can do to reduce its effects, and how to find air quality updates. *(WAFAC)* fireadaptedwashington.org/smoke-ready-communities

FAC Net Resource Sheet: HEPA Filter Community Programs


HEPA Filter Community Programs:
A Whole Community Approach

Smoke Matters

Smoke from wildfire or prescribed fire of any concentration can pose a direct threat to human health and wellbeing. A PM2.5 molecule is 30 times smaller than a piece of human hair and can embed deep into the lungs causing health issues. When the air quality becomes unhealthy, public health specialists recommend people spend more time indoors away from the smoke.

However, indoor air quality must also be protected. Smoke can seep into structures from cracks in windows, from around improperly sealed door and window frames, and when opening and closing doors. Portable HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) filters provide one option to remove smoke and particulate matter from the air. Residential structures with central HVAC systems can also install filters with a MERV rating of 13 or higher. Other solutions include sealing doors and windows where smoke tends to intrude.

Why Create a HEPA Filter Program?

This Resource Guide provides tips for starting a residential HEPA air filter loan program and considerations for partnering to create publically available clean air spaces. *(FACNet)* *fireadaptednetwork.org*

Colville Tribes DIY User Guide: Box Fan Filter

This do-it-yourself webinar and user guide provides step-by-step instructions on how to create box fan filters for residents and businesses to create healthy air spaces in homes and businesses. *(Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation)* cct-enr.com/box-fan-filter

WHAT ABOUT SMOKE FROM PRESCRIBED FIRE?

Smoke impacts are an inevitable part of prescribed fire. Clear messaging, especially for smoke-sensitive individuals, is crucial. Here are a few resources to help:

- Website: **putfiretowork.org** includes messaging guides, templates, photos *(Washington Resource Conservation & Development Council)*
- Resource Guide: **A Conversation About Smoke with Dr. Sarah McCaffrey** *(FACNet)*
- Resource Guide: **Prescribed Fire and Community Health Webinar Resources List** *(FACNet)*