



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**JOINT AIR QUALITY PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BY THE
BUTTE COUNTY AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT and
BUTTE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

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The Butte County Air Quality Management District (BCAQMD) and Butte County Department of Public Health (BCPH) are reminding the community that wildfire smoke in Butte County is possible throughout the year, but is most likely during the summer and autumn seasons. This year, as our community members take precautions to protect ourselves and one another from contracting COVID-19, it is especially important to prepare your home and business to reduce the effects of smoke during wildfire events.

The major air pollutant of concern during wildfires is fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}). While all persons may experience varying degrees of symptoms, people at increased risk include: young children, older adults, pregnant women, people who smoke, people who work outside, and people with respiratory conditions. Symptoms of exposure to wildfire smoke may include, but are not limited to, coughing, watery and itchy eyes, headaches, and difficulty breathing. Exposure to smoke can reduce the body's ability to fight infection and viruses and can worsen the symptoms of respiratory illnesses, such as COVID-19. The following are recommendations to follow during wildfire smoke events:

- Check with your doctor about what you should do during smoke events if any family member has respiratory illnesses, including asthma, or heart or lung disease.
- Stay inside as much as possible and make your indoor air environment safe.
 - Try to limit sources of air pollution in your home (smoking, use of incense or candles, and frying food are some examples of indoor air pollution sources).
 - Seal any windows or doors that allow outside air into your home.
 - If you have air conditioning, make sure your setting is on "recirculate" both in your car and in your home to use inside air rather than drawing in air from the outside. Ask an air conditioning service professional how to close the fresh-air intake if your central system or room air conditioner has one.
 - Stock up on high efficiency air filters (rated MERV-13 or higher) for your HVAC system to filter out smoke particles. Consider purchasing a portable air cleaner to create a "safe room" in your home (avoid Ozone-producing air purifiers).
- Limit activity outside as well as exertion outside. Stock up on food, water and medication so you don't need to go to the store as often.
- Be familiar with your community's resources for "clean air spaces" or places that you can go to cool down and escape the smoke safely.

- Track air quality in your area through websites or mobile apps to plan your activity before heading out. The BCAQMD website (www.butteairquality.com) has daily air quality forecasts as well as links to real-time air quality data. [Airnow.gov](http://airnow.gov) is the primary resource for air quality conditions throughout the nation. Other websites with excellent information include:
 - <http://californiasmokeinfo.blogspot.com/>
 - <https://fire.airnow.gov/>
- When you need to be outside, limit your time in smoky conditions. If you need to wear an N-95 respirator, be sure it is worn correctly. **Remember that a dust mask, bandana, or medical mask will not filter out smoke!**

Learn more at <http://bcagmd.org/resources-education/wildfires/> where you can find links to fact sheets regarding air filtration, properly wearing an N-95 mask, protecting your pets, and more. You can also follow BCAQMD on Twitter (@bcaqmd) and BCPH on Facebook (@ButteCountyPublicHealth) and Twitter (@BC_Pubhealth).

Air Quality Index (AQI): Particle Pollution and Visibility Chart

Index Values	Levels of Health Concern	Cautionary Statements	Visibility Range in Miles
0-50	Good	None	10+ miles
51-100*	Moderate	Unusually sensitive people should consider reducing prolonged or heavy exertion.	5 – 10 miles
101-150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	People with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children should reduce prolonged or heavy exertion.	3 – 5 miles
151-200	Unhealthy	People with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged or heavy exertion.	1.5 – 2.5 miles
201-300	Very Unhealthy	People with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children should avoid all physical activity outdoors. Everyone else should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion.	1 – 1.25 miles
301-500	Hazardous	People with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children should remain indoors and keep activity levels low. Everyone else should avoid all physical activity outdoors.	< 0.75 miles

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