

## AIR QUALITY MESSAGING

### Individuals with Health Conditions

- Individuals with health conditions should talk to their physicians to develop a personal plan for dealing with smoke.
- Elderly persons, pregnant individuals, children, and individuals with respiratory illnesses are particularly susceptible to elevated air pollution levels and should take extra precautions to avoid exposure.
- Those with heart or lung disease, older adults, pregnant individuals, and children should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion, and should either reschedule outdoor activities or move them to another location.
- Elevated particulate matter in the air can trigger wheezing in those who suffer from asthma, emphysema, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), or other respiratory conditions.
- Asthmatics should follow their asthma management plan.
- Keep up to two weeks' worth of extra medication on hand. Be ready with plans to treat asthma or diabetes when there is smoke.
- Individuals should contact their physician if they have cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms believed to be caused by smoke. Concerned individuals should consult their physician for personalized recommendations.

### During Smoke Events

- Shelter in place. Staying indoors with windows and doors closed, where air quality is better, is the best way to protect your health. During high heat and heavy smoke events, keep indoor air cool or visit an air-cooling center.
- Set air conditioning units and car vent systems to re-circulate to prevent outside air from moving inside.
- Smoke can irritate the eyes and airways, causing cough, a dry scratchy throat, runny nose, trouble breathing, and irritated sinuses. **Stay hydrated by drinking water during heavy smoke events.**
- Avoid adding additional air pollution by curtailing activities, such as wood burning, lawn mowing, leaf blowing, driving, barbecuing, smoking, or other dust-producing activities. Avoid using hairspray and painting indoors. If possible, use the stove fan when cooking.
- Leave the affected area if possible, for the duration of the heavy smoke event.

### About Masks

- Masks may not provide you with the protection needed.
- Bandanas and typical surgical masks do nothing to protect against wildfire smoke particles.

- There is no clear evidence that N-95 respirator use by members of the general public is beneficial to an individual's health during wildfire smoke air quality events, and there could be harms.
- Masks, even when worn properly, can become uncomfortable and hot.
- A properly fitted N-95 respirator makes it difficult to breathe and is difficult to use for long periods of time.
- Taking a mask on and off can cause fine particulate matter to build up in the mask, which the wearer will breathe when it is put back on the face.
- If an individual desires a mask, only N-95 or N-100 respirators should be worn.
- Wearing an ill-fitted mask can lead to a false sense of security and to over exertion.
- The presence of facial hair reduces the effectiveness of N-95 masks because it limits the masks ability to create a seal.
- Do not save and reuse N-95 respirators.
- N-95 respirators may be dangerous for certain persons with lung or heart conditions and may lead to
  - increased heart rate
  - increased respiratory rate
  - labored breathing
  - increased heat-related illness
- Certified N-95 respirators are not available for children. Children should not wear these masks – they do not fit properly and can impede breathing.