



DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Promoting and protecting health, well-being, self-sufficiency, and safety of all in Marin County.



PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY: Facts about Mask Protection

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Northern California Fires Affecting Marin Air Quality

The fires in Butte County are impacting air quality across the region. The Public Health Advisory issued November 9 is still in effect. This communication offers additional information regarding personal protection.

The best way to protect yourself is to limit outdoor exposure to wildfire smoke.

Will a face mask protect me from wildfire smoke?

The following *do not* protect your lungs from wildfire smoke:

- Bandanas or towels (wet or dry) or tissue held over the mouth and nose
- Paper “dust mask” or surgical masks that hooks around your ears

For those who cannot avoid prolonged activities outdoors “respirator masks” labeled N95 or N100 may provide some protection.

- Individuals with respiratory conditions should consult their doctor before using a mask— masks can limit air flow and make it more difficult to breathe.
- The respirator masks do not seal well on people with facial hair or beard.
- Respirator masks are sized for adult faces and don’t provide protection for young children.
- Respirator masks filter fine particles but not gases in wildfire smoke.
- Respirators are sold at many pharmacies, hardware stores, and home repair stores.
- Employers of outdoor workers should offer respirator masks for their employees who cannot be placed on indoor duties.

What can I do to protect myself?

Limiting exposure to wildfire smoke is the primary goal. Depending on your situation, a combination of these strategies may offer the most protection.

- Minimize the amount of time spent outdoors.

- Avoid vigorous outdoor activities. When air quality is unhealthy cancel or reschedule sports practices and games.
- Keep indoor air as clean as possible. If air conditioning is available, set it to recycle indoor air. Keep windows and doors closed as much as possible.
- High-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters can reduce indoor air pollution.
- Avoid smoking tobacco, vaping, using wood-burning stoves or fireplaces, burning candles, incenses or vacuuming.
- Drink plenty of water to maintain proper hydration.
- Individuals with asthma should follow their asthma action plans and keep their quick-relief medicine close at hand.
- People with chronic respiratory conditions are most at risk and should consider leaving the area until healthy air returns.
- Listen to your body and contact your healthcare provider or call 911 if you have trouble breathing, chest pain, severe fatigue, dizziness, or worsening of asthma or chronic respiratory illness.

You can also follow @MarinHHS or MarinHHS.org for updates.

For up to date information about fires in California go to:

<http://www.calfire.ca.gov/>

For up to date information about air quality in the Bay Area go to:

<http://www.baaqmd.gov/>