



Mendocino County Health & Human Services Agency

Healthy People, Healthy Communities

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Press Release

Not for op-ed

Date: November 9, 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Smoky Conditions in Mendocino County

The Camp Fire is continuing to burn in Butte County, about 100 miles away from the Mendocino County line. This means smoky skies and poor air quality for most of our region. Smoke in the air can cause difficulty in breathing and other respiratory problems, so it is important to consider your health and that of your loved ones. According to Mendocino County's Public Health Officer Dr. Gary Pace, M.D., "Those under the age of 12 and those over the age of 65, pregnant women, and those with pre-existing health problems such as asthma, bronchitis, COPD and heart problems are considered to be high risk groups who are particularly vulnerable when breathing in smoke."

Local health departments have recommended using N-95 masks to protect yourself against some of the impacts of smoke. These masks are available for free at Mendocino County public libraries in Ukiah, Willits, Covelo, and Fort Bragg during operating hours. Please call ahead as hours may vary over this holiday weekend.

You can check the current air quality for Mendocino County at the Mendocino County Air Quality Management District's website at <http://www.co.mendocino.ca.us/aqmd/>, and you can sign up for air quality notifications at <http://www.enviroflash.info/signup.cfm>.

More tips from the Mendocino County Public Health department:

- High risk groups, (children, those over 65, pregnant women, individuals with medical conditions having to do with the lungs or heart) are especially susceptible to harm by smoke inhalation, and should take extra care in these smoky conditions. Those with these specified medical conditions should carefully adhere to their medical treatment plans and maintain at least a five-day supply of prescribed medications.

- Everyone is at risk when air quality conditions are “unhealthy” or “hazardous”.
- Smoke from wildfires contains chemicals, gases, and fine particles that can harm health. The greatest hazard comes from breathing fine particles, which can reduce lung function, worsen asthma and other existing heart and lung conditions, and cause coughing, wheezing and difficulty breathing.
- Wearing a protective mask may offer some protection. N-95 masks can reduce contact with some of the harmful particulate matter, but they also increase the work of breathing and they don’t keep all smoke out of lungs, so they are not to be relied upon solely. It is much better to avoid the smoky air by leaving the smoky area or by remaining indoors as much as possible.
- Dust masks (different from N-95) are not recommended for smoke protection.
- Keep all windows closed. If you have air conditioning, turn it to interior recirculation or completely turn off and use fans. This prevents the intake of the outside, smoky air. Avoid vacuuming (which stirs up the dust) and avoid increasing smoke in the house (for example: burning candles or incense, smoking cigarettes and running an in-door fireplace may be harmful).
- If you, or someone with you, begins to experience symptoms such as dizziness, shortness of breath, or chest discomfort, get them out of the smoke and have them rest. If symptoms continue, seek medical attention. Getting enough rest and drinking plenty of fluids may be helpful.

For more info on protecting yourself from wildfire smoke, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/features/wildfires/index.html>.

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