AIR QUALITY PRECAUTIONS- CAHAN FACT SHEET

Instructions for Those Most Adversely Affected by Smoke Inhalation

Young children, the elderly, and those with lung or heart ailments are especially vulnerable in smoky conditions and should follow these guidelines.

- Individuals with lung diseases, such as asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, or heart disease, including angina or congestive heart failure, should make sure that they are on their medication and have at least a five-day supply on hand.

- Individuals with asthma should consult their physician about an asthma management plan and stick to it during the unusually smoky conditions.

How to Tell if Smoke is Affecting You

Smoke can cause:

- Coughing
- Scratchy throat
- Irritated sinuses
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Headaches
- Stinging eyes
- Runny nose

If You Have Heart Disease, Lung Disease, or a Pre-Existing Respiratory Condition, Smoke Might Make Your Symptoms Worse

People who have heart disease might experience:

- Chest pain
- Rapid heartbeat
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue

People who have respiratory allergies, asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), including chronic bronchitis and emphysema, might experience:

- Inability to breathe normally
- Cough with or without mucus
- Chest discomfort

- Wheezing and shortness of breath

Even healthy people may experience some of these symptoms in smoky conditions.

Protect Yourself

Following are ways to protect your health.

- Pay attention to local air quality reports. Listen and watch for news or health warnings about smoke.

- If you are advised to stay indoors, keep indoor air as clean as possible. Keep windows and doors closed unless it is extremely hot outside. Run an air conditioner if you have one, but keep the fresh-air intake closed and the filter clean to prevent outdoor smoke from getting inside. If you do not have an air conditioner and it is too warm to stay inside with the windows closed, seek shelter elsewhere.

- No strenuous physical activities outdoors. We recommend that active children play indoors.

- Use a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter to reduce breathing problems. Room air cleaners, which utilize a HEPA filter, may reduce the number of irritating fine particles in indoor air**.**

- Do not add to indoor pollution. When smoke levels are high, do not use anything that burns, such as candles, fireplaces, or gas stoves. Do not vacuum because it stirs up particles already inside your home. Do not smoke because smoking puts even more pollution into the air.

Masks

Most dust masks are not effective in reducing smoke exposure during a wildfire because they are not designed to filter very small particles and do not fit well enough to provide an airtight seal around the wearer's mouth and nose.

- Surgical masks that trap small particles are designed to filter air coming out of the wearer's mouth and do not provide a good seal to prevent inhalation of small particles or gases in smoke.

- Inexpensive paper "comfort" or "dust" masks commonly found at hardware stores are designed to trap large particles, such as sawdust, not smoke, and therefore do not provide adequate protection for your lungs.

- Mask use may be detrimental by giving the wearer a false sense of security, which might encourage increased physical activity and time spent outdoors. Also, wearing a mask may actually be harmful to some people with heart or lung disease because it can make the lungs work harder to breathe.

Many types of commercially available masks cannot effectively filter out small smoke particles. They can however, provide some protection from the larger smoke particles that can become airborne when sweeping up soot or ash during cleanup activities. Some types of masks can also filter out up to 95% of small smoke particles. These masks are marked with one of the following: “P95”, “R95” or “N95”, and tend to be more expensive than ordinary dust masks. Other masks with higher ratings (marked “P100”, “R100”, or “N100”) can filter out even more particles. If properly fit to the wearer’s face, such masks can provide significant protection against particles in smoke. However, without a good seal around the wearer’s mouth and nose, even these masks will not be effective. Also, they do not protect against irritating gases in smoke.