

# Air Quality Statement

## Information for residents affected by smoke

[U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) has issued air quality alerts due to smoke impacts from surrounding wildfires for parts of the Eastern USA.

**Impact:** Exposure to particle pollution can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis and increase risk of respiratory infections.

**Instructions:** Use caution as conditions warrant. People with heart or lung diseases should follow their doctor’s advice for dealing with episodes of unhealthy air quality. Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion, as conditions dictate.

## Air Quality Health Index (AQHI)

People with heart or breathing problems are at greater risk. Follow your doctor’s advice about exercising and managing your condition.

Air Quality Index	Who Needs to be Concerned?	What Should I Do?
Good 0-50	It's a great day to be active outside.	
Moderate 51-100	Some people who may be unusually sensitive to particle pollution.	<p><b>Unusually sensitive people:</b> Consider reducing prolonged or heavy exertion. Watch for symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath. These are signs to take it easier.</p> <p><b>Everyone else:</b> It's a good day to be active outside.</p>
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups 101-150	Sensitive groups include people with heart or lung disease, older adults, children and teenagers.	<p><b>Sensitive groups:</b> Reduce prolonged or heavy exertion. It's OK to be active outside, but take more breaks and do less intense activities. Watch for symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath.</p> <p><b>People with asthma</b> should follow their asthma action plans and keep quick relief medicine handy.</p> <p><b>If you have heart disease:</b> Symptoms such as palpitations, shortness of breath, or unusual fatigue may indicate a serious problem. If you have any of these, contact your health care provider.</p>
Unhealthy 151 to 200	Everyone	<p><b>Sensitive groups:</b> Avoid prolonged or heavy exertion. Move activities indoors or reschedule to a time when the air quality is better.</p> <p><b>Everyone else:</b> Reduce prolonged or heavy exertion. Take more breaks during all outdoor activities.</p>
Very Unhealthy 201-300	Everyone	<p><b>Sensitive groups:</b> Avoid all physical activity outdoors. Move activities indoors or reschedule to a time when air quality is better.</p> <p><b>Everyone else:</b> Avoid prolonged or heavy exertion. Consider moving activities indoors or rescheduling to a time when air quality is better.</p>
Hazardous 301-500	Everyone	<p><b>Everyone:</b> Avoid all physical activity outdoors.</p> <p><b>Sensitive groups:</b> Remain indoors and keep activity levels low. Follow tips for keeping particle levels low indoors.</p>

Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

## Wildfire smoke precautions

### Eight tips for protecting yourself from breathing wildfire smoke

If possible, limit your exposure to smoke. Here are eight tips to help you protect your health:

Pay attention to local air quality reports and the [Environmental Protection Agency's Air Quality Index](#). When a wildfire occurs in your area, watch for news, health and official warnings or evacuations from local authorities. Pay attention to public health messages and take extra safety measures such as avoid spending time outdoors. Be prepared to evacuate to areas with better air quality as appropriate for individual health conditions.

Pay attention to visibility guides if they are available. Although not every community measures the amount of particles in the air, some communities have guidelines to help people estimate air quality based on how far they can see. Air quality monitoring websites are available.

If you are told to stay indoors, stay indoors, and keep your indoor air as clean as possible. Keep windows and doors closed unless it is very hot outside. Run an air conditioner or cleaner, and fans if you have them to stay cool. Keep the fresh air intake closed and the filter/duct clean to prevent outdoor smoke from getting inside. Seek shelter elsewhere if it is too warm to stay inside with the windows closed.

Use an air filter. Use a freestanding indoor air filter with particle removal to help protect people with heart disease, asthma or other respiratory conditions, the elderly and children from the effects of wildfire smoke. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on filter replacement and where to place the device.

Do not add to indoor pollution. When smoke levels are high, do not use anything that burns, such as candles and fireplaces. Do not vacuum — vacuuming stirs up particles already inside your home. Do not smoke tobacco or other products. Smoking puts even more pollution into the air.

Follow your doctor's advice about medicines and about your respiratory management plan if you have asthma or another lung disease or cardiovascular disease. Call your doctor if your symptoms worsen.

Do not rely on dust masks for protection. Paper "comfort" or "dust" masks commonly found at hardware stores trap large particles, such as sawdust. These masks will not protect your lungs from smoke. An "N95" mask, properly worn, will offer some protection. If you decide to keep a mask on hand, see the [Respirator Fact Sheet](#) provided by CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

Avoid smoke exposure during outdoor recreation. Wildfires and prescribed burns — fires that are set on purpose to manage land — can create smoky conditions. Before you travel to a park or forest, check to see if any wildfires are happening or if any prescribed burns are planned.

### Additional resources

- Air Quality (AQHI) measured by Environmental Protection Agency
- AQI Alert issued by Environmental Protection Agency
- Monitor local conditions via: [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov)

Visit AVMA PLIT's [Wildfire Resource Center](#) for comprehensive resources to help you prepare and respond to a wildfire.