



Wildfires and Health: How to Protect Yourself

Wildfires: An Overview

Wildfires are unplanned fires that burn in forests and other areas. They are caused by both human-made and natural events. The smoke and byproducts of wildfires can travel long distances and affect large populations. Due to land and forest management practices, and climate-induced changes, the risk of wildfires in North America is increasing.

Wildfires and Health

Wildfires are increasingly recognized as major health threats. Fires can release large amounts of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, and particulate matter into the air. These pollutants can lead to several health effects.

Who is most vulnerable?

- People with lung and heart disease
- Pregnant women
- Older adults
- Infants and young children



Health risks from wildfire smoke:

- Decreased lung function
- Coughing and wheezing
- Lung inflammation
- Bronchitis
- Worsening of asthma
- Other lung diseases
- Worsening heart disease
- Eye irritation
- Burns and injuries





The M-LEEaD Center's Community Engagement Core (CEC) increases awareness and understanding of environmental health research.

Stakeholder Advocacy Board members include:

- Community Health and Social Services
- Detroit Health Department
- Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation
- Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice
- Eastside Community Network
- Ecology Center
- Green Door Initiative
- Henry Ford Health System
- MDHHS
- Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition
- Sierra Club
- We the People of Detroit

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How do I protect myself from wildfire smoke?


① Monitor your air quality

Use AirNow.gov to monitor your location's Air Quality Index (AQI)- which measures the pollution level in the air.

② Take action!

- Go indoors and close all windows, doors, and any other openings.
- Use an effective air filter, like a MERV13, or an air purifier indoors.
- In the car, close windows, use air conditioning and recirculate the air.
- When outdoors, wear a well fitted N-95 mask.

Air Quality Index:


Take action
when the AQI
number is at the
"Orange" level
or higher.

0-50	Good
51-100	Moderate
101-150	Unhealthy for sensitive groups
151-200	Unhealthy
201-300	Very unhealthy
300+	Hazardous

Please see http://mleead.umich.edu/Coec_Fact_Sheets.php for the citations included in this factsheet. The University of Michigan Lifestage Environmental Exposures and Disease Center (M-LEEaD) Community Engagement Core (CEC) promotes collaboration among UM environmental health researchers and communities to advance knowledge of environmental health issues that affect community members in Detroit and Southeast Michigan.

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