



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 12, 2021

## WILDFIRE SMOKE ALERT FOR THE PUGET SOUND REGION

This is a wildfire smoke alert from the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency and the local public health agencies of King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties. Air pollution is increasing due to wildfire smoke and may cause health problems.

Winds are bringing wildfire smoke into the Puget Sound region. We expect air quality to worsen today (Thursday) and reach levels UNHEALTHY FOR SENSITIVE GROUPS in many areas in the Puget Sound region. We expect smoke to continue or worsen on Friday. Some areas may have higher concentrations for short periods of time if additional smoke plumes move into the area. Smoke should begin to clear on Saturday.

Wildfire smoke can cause and worsen many health problems:

- Asthma attack
- Chest pain
- Coughing
- Fast heartbeat
- Headaches
- Irritated sinuses
- Stinging eyes
- Trouble breathing

Both COVID-19 and wildfire smoke affect the respiratory and cardiovascular systems and increase health risks, especially for sensitive populations.

Please follow the guidelines from your local health or state health department regarding current restrictions and facial covering guidelines. The following recommendations are based on current guidelines to the best of our knowledge.

Current air quality conditions are MODERATE but will reach UNHEALTHY FOR SENSITIVE GROUPS in many areas of the Puget Sound region.

- Air quality conditions may change quickly. Check the air quality forecast regularly at the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency's [website](#).
- When the air looks and smells smoky, it may not be the best time for activities outdoors. Use your best judgement.
- Be prepared. [Take steps now to be ready](#) once wildfire smoke fills our air.

When air quality reaches conditions that are UNHEALTHY FOR SENSITIVE GROUPS, the following groups should take precautions: infants, children, and people over 65, or those who are pregnant, have heart or lung diseases (such as asthma or COPD), respiratory infections, diabetes, stroke survivors, or are suffering from COVID-19:

- Stay at home when possible. If you can't stay cool at home or are especially sensitive to smoke, it may be best to seek shelter elsewhere.
- Limit your activity outdoors, such as running, bicycling, physical labor, sports, or hobbies.
- If possible, close windows in your home to keep the indoor air clean. If you have an air conditioner, use it in recirculation mode.
  - Make sure your home ventilation system is maintained following manufacturer recommendations (like replacing filters regularly). Don't contribute to indoor air pollution such as burning candles or vacuuming. Use a [portable air cleaner](#) if available.
- If you do not have an air conditioner, consider finding a public place with clean, air-conditioned indoor air like a mall, public library, or community center. Call ahead to make sure they have air conditioning.
- Heat [can be dangerous](#) too. If it becomes unbearably hot, it's better to open the windows for a short period of time.
- Schools, camps, sports teams, and daycare providers should consider postponing outdoor activities or moving them indoors. [More information here](#).
- NIOSH approved masks with the label "N95" or "N100" are the most effective type of mask that protects you from air pollution. Smaller quantities are now available, but be mindful not to purchase too many. Any mask or face covering should be used only as a last resort to protect against wildfire smoke. Please check with your doctor to see if this appropriate for you. [More information here](#).
  - Cloth face coverings are recommended to reduce the spread of COVID-19 for those who are not fully vaccinated or are in public indoor spaces, but they offer limited protection from air pollution and wildfire smoke.
- People respond to smoke in different ways and at different levels. Pay attention to symptoms that you or those you are caring for are experiencing and take the above steps to reduce exposures at lower smoke levels if needed.
- Check with your health care provider for more specific health questions and concerns. As always, seek medical attention if symptoms are serious.