

Key Resources to Help You Stay Safe While Evacuated from Wildfires

If your home was evacuated due to a wildfire, **do not return home until authorities say it is safe.**

Smoke and ash from wildfires and the chemicals from burned materials (such as furniture) can irritate your eyes, nose, or skin and cause coughing, difficulty breathing and other symptoms. The ash and debris may contain a variety of hazardous substances such as asbestos, lead, and soot. Children are especially at risk for health effects from exposure to wildfire smoke, in part because their bodies are still developing. People with asthma, COPD, heart disease, and pregnant women are also more susceptible to wildfire-related health effects.

Take the following steps and refer to the resources below to protect yourself and your loved ones from COVID-19 and the aftermath of wildfires.



Shelter Operators –

Check out the last page for additional shelter resources.

Pay attention to health symptoms.

- Seek medical help right away if you or your children experience breathing problems, are very sleepy, refuse food and water, or have other health concerns.
 - Learn more about how wildfires can impact your health on OHA's website: <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/preparedness/prepare/pages/prepareforwildfire.aspx>
- If you have heart or lung disease, follow your health care provider's advice about prevention and treatment of symptoms.
- COVID-19 and wildfire smoke exposure share some symptoms. For example, cough, difficulty breathing, and headaches can be caused by both COVID-19 and wildfire smoke. However, fever (more than 100.4°F), chills, and diarrhea are not typically associated with wildfire smoke exposure and may indicate COVID-19 infection. If you have any of these symptoms, consult the CDC's coronavirus self-checker tool to see whether you should contact your health care provider: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/coronavirus-self-checker.html>.
- If you are in an evacuation shelter with many people nearby and have symptoms associated with COVID-19, contact a health care provider right away. If you are not in a public setting with many people nearby (for example, sheltering with friends or family), you should self-isolate.
 - Learn how to self-isolate: <https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/le2388A.pdf>

- Learn more about COVID-19 symptoms:
<https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/LE2681.pdf>
- Learn more about wildfire evacuation protocol for people quarantining or isolating due to COVID-19:
<https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/le3257.pdf>
- Call 2-1-1 for help finding a health care provider. 2-1-1 is not specific to wildfire situations. It is a regional, free information and referral center connecting residents to community resources in their area.
 - » CALL: 211 or 1-866-698-6155 (Free language interpreters available by phone; Phone hours: 24/7)
 - » TTY: dial 711 and call 1-866-698-6155
 - » TEXT: your zip code to 898211 (TXT211) (text available English and Spanish; Text hours: 9am-5pm)
 - » EMAIL: help@211info.org (email available in English, Spanish, and Mandarin)

Take steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- Learn about COVID-19 and how to protect your loved ones by visiting OHA's COVID-19 webpage: <http://healthoregon.org/coronavirus/>.
- Everyone should take these prevention steps:
 - Wear a cloth or disposable face covering when you go out.
 - Stay at least six feet away from people you do not live with.
 - Cover coughs and sneezes with elbow or tissue. If you use a tissue, throw the tissue away and wash your hands right away.
 - Wash hands often for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water. If you cannot use soap and warm water, use hand sanitizer (60-95% alcohol content).
 - Do not touch your face.
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects.

Protect your emotional well-being.

- After a wildfire, you may feel sad, mad, guilty, or numb. These are all normal reactions to stress. Talk to a psychologist, social worker, or professional counselor for help coping. For links to a wide range of resources, check out the behavioral health resources tab on OHA's COVID-19 webpage: <https://govstatus.egov.com/OR-OHA-COVID-19>.
- Call 2-1-1 for additional mental health resources.
- The Oregon Behavioral Health Support Line is a free and confidential resource for all Oregonians who are looking for emotional support. Call 1-800-923-HELP (4357). You do not need to be in a mental health crisis to call this line.

- SAMHSA’s Disaster Distress Helpline (<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline>) provides 24/7, 365-days-a-year crisis counseling and support to people experiencing emotional distress related to natural or human caused disasters. Call SAMHSA’s Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to speak to a trained crisis counselor.

Check air quality reports.

- Smoke can travel far from the source of the fire and stay in the air for long periods of time. Pay attention to local air quality reports.
 - Check out the free OregonAir App. Download the App from Google Play or Apple Store.
 - » Alternatively, visit the Oregon Smoke Blog or EPA’s AirNow website for air quality information (AQI).
 - Oregon Smoke Blog: <https://oregonsmoke.blogspot.com/>
 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s AirNow Website: <https://www.airnow.gov/>

Keep your indoor air as clean as possible.

- Learn about strategies to reduce smoke exposure in OHA’s FAQ document about wildfire smoke and public health: <https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served//le8626.pdf>
- Learn how to set-up a clean room at home to help reduce smoke exposure: <https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/create-clean-room-protect-indoor-air-quality-during-wildfire>
- Key tips:
 - 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.
 - Running a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter or an electro-static precipitator (ESP) can also help you keep your indoor air clean. You can also make your own clean air fan in this easy-to-follow, do-it-yourself clean air fan instruction video by following these written instructions: <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PREPAREDNESS/PREPARE/Documents/Fact-Sheet-DIY-Air-Filter.pdf>
 - If you do not have an air conditioner and it is too warm to stay inside with the windows closed, seek shelter elsewhere.
 - Do not add to indoor air pollution.
 - » When smoke levels are high, do not use anything that burns, such as candles or fireplaces, and reduce use of gas, kerosene, propane, and wood stoves, if possible.
 - » Do not vacuum because this stirs up particles already inside your home.
 - » Do not smoke as this will also add more chemicals to the air.

Drive safely.

- Reduce smoke in your vehicle by closing the windows and vents and operating the air conditioning with the fresh air intake closed to reduce outdoor smoke from getting in the car. Never leave children in a car or truck alone.
- Watch out for trash and debris on the road. Be alert for broken traffic lights and missing street signs.

Clean up safely.

- Check this Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) website for availability of hazardous materials response professionals to assess your property for hazards such as asbestos fibers, toxic chemicals, and electrical or structural hazards: <https://www.oregon.gov/deq/wildfires/Pages/Wildfire-Debris-Removal.aspx>
- If you do clean up yourself, make a clean-up plan and secure gear to safely clean up buildings and structures impacted by wildfires. DEQ has a fact sheet that will help you manage ash and debris from burned buildings more safely: <https://www.oregon.gov/deq/wildfires/Pages/After-the-Fire.aspx>
- Follow the returning-home checklist from California's Department of Forestry and Fire Protection: https://www.readyforwildfire.org/wp-content/uploads/CALFIRE_ReturningHomeAfterAFire_Revised.pdf
- Additional resources include the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's webpage on how to clean up safely after a disaster (<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/cleanup/facts.html>) and webpage on worker safety during cleanup (<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/wildfires/cleanupworkers.html>).
- Key tips:
 - While cloth or disposable face coverings reduce the spread of COVID-19, they are not effective at filtering out dangerous particles, gases, and other substances from wildfires. N95 respirators offer some protection from airborne particles, although they offer the best protection if they have been fit-tested. However, these are currently in short supply and being reserved for health care workers due to COVID-19. Refer to the DEQ [fact sheet](#) for more details on how to choose the best mask for clean-up.
 - Avoid heat stress by taking frequent breaks and drinking water.
 - When cleaning, wear protection clothing, including a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, work gloves, appropriate masks, and sturdy thick-soled shoes. These will help protect you from hazardous debris and chemicals.
 - Children should not do any cleanup work. Fires may deposit large amounts of ash and dust with harmful chemicals. Avoid bringing polluted ash and dust back to areas used by children (such as home or car). Remove shoes at the doorway, wash contaminated clothing separately, and change out contaminated clothing before you have contact with your children.
 - Do not drink or use water from the faucet until emergency officials say it is OK. Water supply systems can be damaged and become contaminated or

polluted. If your well has been damaged by fire, contact a local licensed and bonded well constructor or pump installer to determine the extent of the damage.

- Discard any food that has been exposed to heat, smoke, or ash.
- Learn about how to salvage and clean up items in your home that survive a fire. The U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency has a fact sheet with tips: https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1534447191536-164bbf39b67bbebacc73bb75d63c24ac/Fire_FIMA_Fact_Sheet_2015_rev_CA.pdf

If you have questions about the material in this resource guide, please email OHA at EHAP.INFO@dhsosha.state.or.us.

Shelter operators: You can provide this document to wildfire evacuees to give them additional information about COVID-19 and environmental health considerations. This document can be downloaded and printed in multiple languages.

Key Resources for Evacuation Shelters:

- Learn how to identify cleaner air shelters and spaces for protection from wildfire smoke:
<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PREPAREDNESS/PREPARE/Documents/IdentificationOfCleanAirShelters.pdf>
- Follow OHA's COVID-19 Interim Shelter Guidance:
<https://sharedsystems.dhsosha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/le2256A.pdf>

FYI For Reviewers -- Adapted from PEHSU and CDC and OHA webpage

https://www.pehsu.net/Library/facts/PEHSU_Protecting_Children_from_Wildfire_Smoke_and_Ash_FACT_SHEET.pdf

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/wildfires/afterfire.html>



PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION

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