

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**SMOKE HEALTH ADVISORY**

OXNARD, Calif. – Ventura County Public Health Department cautions that unhealthy air quality related to the Maria Fire affecting our county may become a concern. Air quality will be variable while there are active fires in the area and shifting winds. Children, the elderly, and those with respiratory conditions such as asthma, COPD, emphysema and heart disease are most impacted.

To decrease exposure to wildfire smoke and to limit harmful effects from smoke, the public is urged to follow these healthy habits:

- **Limit your time outside and stay indoors as much as possible.**
- If possible, seek shelter in buildings with filtered air OR move to areas outside the region less impacted by wildfire smoke until smoke levels subside.
- Keep your windows and doors closed unless it's extremely hot outside.
- Run your home or car air conditioner on recycle or recirculate. Keep the fresh air intake closed and the filter clean to prevent bringing additional smoke inside.
- If you or your children have asthma or other lung disease, make sure you follow your doctor's directions about taking your medications and following your asthma management plan. Call your doctor for advice if symptoms worsen or consider leaving the area.
- Do not rely on dust masks for protection. Paper or "dust" masks commonly found at hardware stores are designed to trap large particles, such as sawdust. These masks will *not* protect your lungs from the small particles found in wildfire smoke. To avoid adding additional air pollution, please curtail air polluting activities such as wood burning, lawn mowing, leaf blowing, driving and barbecuing.

"If you smell smoke or see ash falling, it's best to be inside. People with heart or lung disease are at particular risk from smoke exposure" says Dr. Robert Levin, Ventura County's Public Health Officer.

Due to continuing unhealthy air conditions resulting from the fires affecting Ventura County, free particulate respirators (N-95 masks) are available to the public at various locations throughout the county. A list of current distribution locations can also be found at [www.vcemergency.com](http://www.vcemergency.com). The availability and distribution of masks is being coordinated

by various County offices, including the Ventura County Health Care Agency, Public Health Department, Emergency Medical Services Agency, and County Executive Office in collaboration with various community organizations.

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**Guidance:  
Use of N95 masks for  
General Public**

# Wildfire Smoke and Face Masks

Wildfire smoke can irritate your eyes, nose, throat, and lungs. It can make you cough and wheeze, and can make it hard to breathe. If you have asthma or another lung disease, or heart disease, inhaling wildfire smoke can be especially harmful.

If you cannot leave the smoky area, good ways to protect your lungs from wildfire smoke include staying indoors and reducing physical activity. Wearing a special mask called a “particulate respirator” can also help protect your lungs from wildfire smoke. These masks should be used mostly by people who have to go outdoors.

## Will a face mask protect me from wildfire smoke?

Respirator masks labeled N95 or N100 provide some protection – they filter-out fine particles but not hazardous gases (such as carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, and acrolein). This type of mask can be found at many hardware and home repair stores and pharmacies. Your local health agency may also have these masks.

- Choose an N95 or N100 mask that has two straps that go around your head. Don’t choose a one-strap paper dust mask or a surgical mask that hooks around your ears – these don’t protect against the fine particles in smoke.
- Choose a size that fits over your nose and under your chin. It should seal tightly to your face. These masks don’t come in sizes that fit young children.
- Don’t use bandanas or towels (wet or dry) or tissue held over the mouth and nose. These may relieve dryness but they won’t protect your lungs from wildfire smoke.

Anyone with lung or heart disease or who is chronically ill should check with their health care provider before using any mask. Using respirator masks can make it harder to breathe, which may make existing medical conditions worse. The extra effort it takes to breathe through a respirator mask can make it uncomfortable to use them for very long. These masks should be used mostly by people who have to go outdoors.

Respirator masks shouldn't be used on young children – they don’t seal well enough to provide protection. They also don’t seal well on people with beards.

## How do I use my respirator mask?

- Place the mask over your nose and under your chin, with one strap placed below the ears and one strap above. Adjust the mask so that air cannot get through at the edges.
- Pinch the metal part of the mask tightly over the top of your nose.
- The mask fits best on clean shaven skin.
- Throw away your mask when breathing through it gets difficult, if it gets damaged, or if the inside gets dirty. Use a new mask each day if you can.
- It’s harder to breathe through a mask, so take breaks often if you work outside.
- If you feel dizzy or nauseated, go to a less smoky area, take off your mask, and get medical help if you don’t feel better.



N95 respirators can help protect your lungs from wildfire smoke. Straps must go above and below the ears.



A one-strap paper mask will NOT protect your lungs from wildfire smoke.



A surgical mask will NOT protect your lungs from wildfire smoke.