What can I do now to protect my family from wildfire smoke?

Use this checklist to prepare for wildfire smoke events and improve indoor air quality in your home.

Outdoor air, including fine particles from wildfire smoke, can enter your home through many different ways. Through open windows and doors, ventilation fans such as bathroom or kitchen fans that vent to the outdoors, or heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems with a fresh air intake. It can even come in through small openings, joints, cracks, and around closed windows and doors. This checklist will help prepare you for wildfire smoke events and improve your home's indoor air quality.

Wildfire smoke preparedness checklist:

- ☐ **Sign up for local alerts and stay informed:** Know how to get important alerts and health warnings, including air quality information, and public service announcements (PSAs) about wildfire smoke events. Visit the Utah Division of Air Quality at air.utah.gov or download the Utah Air app for hourly air quality updates.

- ☐ **Make a plan to manage health conditions:** If any family member has a heart or lung condition such as asthma, talk to your doctor about what to do during a wildfire smoke event. Make a plan to manage the health condition.

- ☐ **Stock up on essentials:** Have several days of medications on hand. Buy groceries that don't need to be refrigerated or cooked because cooking can add to indoor air pollution.

- ☐ **Know how to adjust your HVAC system or air conditioner to keep smoke out:** If you have a central HVAC system, find out if it has a fresh air intake. If it does, learn how to close it or turn the system to "recirculate" mode. Check your HVAC filter to make sure it's in good condition; consider upgrading to a MERV 13 or higher filter if your system can accommodate. Consult an HVAC technician if you're not sure. Adjust your air conditioner based on the type; see the table below.

- [ ] **Buy a portable air cleaner or high efficiency HVAC filter:** Consider buying a portable air cleaner with a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter. Make sure it is the right size for the room. **Make sure it doesn't produce ozone.** Visit the California Air Resources Board website for a list of air cleaners that have been tested and shown to emit little or no ozone.

- [ ] **Make a do-it-yourself (DIY) air cleaner:** If portable air cleaners are not available or affordable, you can make a do-it-yourself (DIY) air cleaner. See additional resources below.

- [ ] **Have N95 respirators:** Keep a supply of N95 respirators on hand. You can buy them at many home improvement stores. Learn how to choose the correct mask and wear it correctly (see "Protect your health from wildfire smoke" fact sheet in additional resources). **Cloth or paper masks will not filter out wildfire smoke.**

Type of air conditioner	Adjustment recommendations
Evaporative cooler (swamp cooler)	• If possible, avoid using a swamp cooler. They bring smoke inside the home. • Completely cover the outside air intakes with a 4-inch thick high-efficiency (MERV 13) furnace filter. • If you can't add a filter, only use the evaporative cooler when you need during smoky conditions because it can bring smoke inside. • Consider other cooling options, like fans or window air conditioners.
Window air conditioner	• If it has an outdoor air damper, find out how to close it. Most current window ACs don't have this feature, but it's good to check. • Make sure the seal between the air conditioner and window is as tight as possible.
Portable air conditioner	• If your portable air conditioner has a **single hose**, typically vented out of a window, avoid using it if possible or use it sparingly. • If your portable air conditioner has **2 hoses**, make sure the seal between the window vent kit and the window is as tight as possible. • Consider other cooling options, like fans or a window air conditioner.

Additional resources

Click the links below or scan the QR codes to access additional resources

EPA: Wildfires and Indoor Air Quality

Visit EPA's website for more information and resources on how to prepare for wildfires and poor air quality.

How to choose a portable air cleaner

Portable air cleaners can be used to supplement natural ventilation and HVAC systems.

DHHS: Air pollution and your health

Visit our website for more information and resources on how you can protect your health from poor air quality.

DIY air cleaner using a box fan

This fact sheet will show you how to build a box fan filter.

Protect your health from wildfire smoke fact sheet

This factsheet will help prepare you for wildfire smoke events and help you take steps to reduce your exposure to smoke.

How to create a clean air room

Spend time in a clean room at home can help reduce your exposure to smoke while you stay indoors.

Check local air quality conditions

Stay informed by checking your local air quality conditions.

Stay informed: Download the Utah Air app

Android

iOS