



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
#2017-13

CONTACT for this Release:  
Krista Dommer, Coordinator  
Public Information and Communication  
Office Phone: (209) 468-3571  
Email: kdommer@sjcphs.org

## **STAYING HEALTHY DURING SMOKY CONDITIONS**

*Take Precautions to Protect Your Health from Wildfire Smoke*

STOCKTON, CA (October 11, 2017) - Smoke from wildfires is a complex mixture of gases and fine particles from burning trees and other plant materials. By fine, the scientists mean particles a fraction of the width of a human hair, so small you likely cannot see them. These particles can cause burning eyes, runny nose, coughing, scratchy throat, irritated sinuses and headaches. Wildfires need not be nearby for these symptoms to occur; with the proper weather conditions we can have smoke from fires far away.

Smoke levels can rise and fall rapidly, depending on weather factors including wind direction. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is monitoring the air quality and has issued a health cautionary statement for the Valley that will be in effect until the fires are extinguished. The District further advises residents that this smoke can be harmful to human health and if you see or smell smoke, you are likely being impacted by it.

“Smoke hanging in the air is not good for anyone, but it can make it especially difficult for at-risk populations to breathe,” said Tammy Evans, Director of San Joaquin County Public Health Services. If you have asthma or other lung disease, contact your health care provider NOW to make sure you have an adequate supply of medication and follow your asthma management plan. Seek care in a timely manner if your symptoms are worsening.

To reduce or eliminate breathing problems or other symptoms, Evans urges ALL residents and visitors to:

### **1. Know if you or a family member is at risk**

- If you have heart or lung disease, such as congestive heart failure, angina, COPD, emphysema or asthma, you are at higher risk of having health problems from smoke.
- Older adults are more likely to be affected by smoke, possibly because they are more likely to have heart or lung diseases than younger people.
- Children are more likely to be affected by health threats from smoke because their airways are still developing and because they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults. Children also are more likely to be active outdoors.

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## **2. Take precautions to protect your health and that of your family**

- Stay indoors.
- Avoid outdoor activities and any strenuous workouts, even if you are healthy.
- Close windows or doors in your house or car.
- Keep air conditioning in the home and in the car on “re-cycled” air so that smoke is not drawn in from the outside.
- Refrain from running your swamp cooler or whole house fan, as they will pull unfiltered outside air into the house.
- If your home becomes too hot, consider leaving your home and visiting an indoor mall, library, or a friend or relative’s house that has air conditioning.
- Monitor family members who are elderly, pregnant or very young for any difficulty breathing and contacting their medical provider with any questions.
- Make sure family members with heart disease or lung problems such as asthma, bronchitis or emphysema, are following their doctor's advice about medicines and about their respiratory management plan. Call the doctor if your symptoms worsen.

Along with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, San Joaquin County Public Health Services is monitoring the fire situation and air quality conditions and will inform residents if any additional action needs to be taken.

### **Additional information may be found at:**

- San Joaquin County Public Health Services, <http://www.sjcphs.org>
- San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, <http://www.valleyair.org/Home.htm>
- San Joaquin County Office of Emergency Services, <http://www.sigov.org/oes/>
- Healthy Air Living, <http://www.healthyairliving.com>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/features/wildfires/index.html>

Attachment: Wildfire Smoke Fact Sheet, pdf

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