



BAY AREA AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Air quality in Napa and Sonoma Counties following the wildfires

Questions have continued to come up regarding the quality of air in the Napa and Sonoma counties now that the fires are out, and the process of ash and debris removal begins. The following is a list of Questions and Answers regarding overall air quality conditions.

How many air monitors are in the wine country wildfire region?

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District maintains air monitoring sites in Napa and Sonoma counties. During the wildfires, the Air District requested, and the California Air Resources Board placed eleven fine particle monitors around the burn areas to monitor particles from smoke and ash. Go to AirNow.gov to check air quality.

What about air quality in my home if my home is still standing and located next door or within a burned-out neighborhood?

Returning residents will smell smoke in the neighborhood for some time. Smoke odors are very pungent and can linger in carpets, furniture, linens, drapes, walls and clothing until they are professionally cleaned. Heavy smoke odors may not mean you have unhealthy air quality in your home, but it is recommended that you contact your insurance company to arrange for professional smoke damage cleaning of your home to help remove the smoke odors.

Do I need to worry about the airborne ash in my home, yard or neighborhood?

Clean up crews are operating under strict dust prevention requirements to limit the spread of airborne ash from properties.

Contact your fire insurance company to see if you are covered for professional home cleaning due to smoke damage. Residents who are returning to their homes should take all reasonable precautions to prevent additional ash or dust from being tracked into their homes.

Why are cleanup crews in white suits in my neighborhood?

Crews conducting clean up working in the ash at burn sites have the highest health risk associated with airborne ash and therefore are required to wear long-protective, clothing and breathing masks. Crews supervising the cleanup, not working directly in the ash do not need to wear the higher level of protective gear.

Is air quality still polluted in my neighborhood?

Air quality conditions in Napa and Sonoma counties have improved substantially now that the fires are out. It is advised residents take precautions to prevent ash from coming into their homes.

- Keep windows and door closed.
- Stay inside as much as possible until adjacent structure sites have been cleared.
- Limit the outdoor time of children and pets and do not let them play around burned structures.
- Keep children and pets out of burned lots.
- Take off your shoes and wipe off pets' paws before they enter your home.
- Do not use leaf blowers to clean up ash or leaves to prevent stirring ash back up into the air.
- Refrain from mowing the lawn until ash in the neighborhood has been removed.
- Leave shoes inside the house by the door to avoid tracking ash back into the home.

Is there more I can do to ensure air quality in my home is safe?

It is a good idea to change the air filter in the heating and cooling unit. Ask a hardware store representative for a HEPA filter for your specific home unit. In some cases, you may need to contact the manufacturer of your home heating system.

Homes with sensitive individuals such as those with respiratory or cardiovascular conditions, children, pregnant women and seniors may want to consider purchasing a free-standing air cleaner with a HEPA filter to create a clean room inside the home.

Can I work in my yard or garden?

It is recommended that residents not work in the garden until after good winter rains, but if residents must work in the garden, wear long sleeves, gloves, an N95 or higher respirator mask and minimize the amount of airborne dust.

Is there any agency that can measure the air inside my home?

Air quality measurements inside individual homes can vary greatly depending on a variety of factors such as:

- If the homeowner has pets
- Burns wood in their fireplace
- Carpets or hardwood flooring
- Children living in the home
- Residents who smoke
- Cooking on the stove regularly
- Frequency of vacuuming and sweeping floors

Indoor air quality is only regulated in industrial settings for worker safety. To maintain clean air inside the home it is important to keep your home clean, pet and cigarette smoke free, refrain from burning wood in a fireplace and opening windows and doors when air quality conditions are clear will help get a clean exchange of air inside the home.

There is ash in my yard. Is it toxic and what should I do to remove it?

The ash in the burned neighborhoods may be hazardous due to the nature of the materials consumed in the fires.

Because the ash may be hazardous, it is recommended that residents who are returning to standing homes take every precaution to reduce the amount of outside dust and ash from entering their home.

Army Corps of Engineers and private contracting crews working on debris and ash removal in burn neighborhoods will be operating using best practices to minimize dust and to protect workers, neighboring residents, and the environment including water supplies.

I have a medical condition and am concerned about my health.

If you have specific health concerns, we encourage you to contact your personal physician.

These maps show the highest air quality readings recorded during the fires and air quality on Nov. 8, 2017.

