



Air Pollution Control District
San Luis Obispo County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 8, 2026

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Prepare Yourself & Your Home for Potential Summer Wildfire Smoke Impacts
Stay indoors for protection from wildfire smoke
Tips for indoor air quality

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY, CA — The San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control Districts (APCD) encourage residents to plan ahead for poor air quality conditions caused by potential future wildfire smoke. Smoke and ash from wildfires contain very small particles known as particulate matter, and this particulate matter can travel from fires even hundreds of miles outside of our county. These particles harm the lungs and heart, and can cause coughing, wheezing, difficulty breathing, chest pain, nausea, and in severe instances, premature mortality. People with heart or lung disease, seniors, kids, and pregnant women are especially sensitive to smoke.

The best protection against wildfire smoke is to stay indoors as much as possible when smoke is present. Take these steps to ensure your family will have safe indoor air quality.

1) Know How to Check Local Air Quality Conditions

- When wildfire smoke is present, conditions can change rapidly. Knowing how and where to check your local air quality is essential.
 - Current Air Quality Conditions: www.slocleanair.org/air-quality/current-air-quality-maps
 - Air Quality Forecast: <https://www.slocleanair.org/air-quality/air-quality-forecast.php>
 - Understand how the air quality index works, and tips to protect your health: <https://www.slocleanair.org/air-quality/health.php>

2) Create a “Clean Air Room” In Your Home

- Pick a HEPA (High-Efficiency Particulate Air) purifier to reduce particulate matter indoors by 90 percent. These can be purchased at hardware stores or online retailers.
- Make sure that the device doesn't create ozone – find a list of safe options online: <https://www.arb.ca.gov/research/indoor/aircleaners/certified.htm>
- HEPA purifiers come in various makes and models, suitable for different room sizes.
- Use the purifier in a room where you spend a lot of time, like a bedroom.
 - HEPA purifiers for an average-sized bedroom cost approximately \$75.
- Check your windows and doors and make sure the room is sealed tightly so smoke from the outdoors does not get pulled inside.



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- Replace the filter as directed in the owner's manual. Filters need to be replaced more frequently if used during a wildfire.
- Assembling a DIY version of an air purifier can be a more affordable option, with materials costing approximately \$40.
- This DIY version has been shown to reduce harmful particulate matter indoors similarly to a HEPA purifier.
- Here's how to make your own:
 - Use tape to attach a 20x20 MERV-rated air filter — like what you would use for your HVAC system — to the **back** of a 20x20 box fan. Attaching to the back of the fan creates a better seal.
 - Use a filter with a MERV rating of 13.
 - Check the filter for the direction of the air flow, marked on the side of the filter.
- Check your windows and doors and make sure the room is sealed tightly so smoke from the outdoors does not get pulled inside.
- Replace the filter more frequently if used during a wildfire.
- As needed, disassemble the box fan to wipe away any accumulated dirt.
- For safety, follow these precautions:
 - Use a box fan that is from 2012 or newer, due to added safety features.
 - Don't leave the device unattended.
 - Turn off the device while sleeping.
 - When the fan is modified in this way, use the device as an air cleaner, not as fan to cool your home.

3) Sign Up For AirAware Alerts

- During wildfires, when significant smoke exposure is possible, SLO County APCD may send out text alerts with additional information to help you protect your health. Sign up today, and see all the other text notifications that are available.
 - **San Luis Obispo:** <https://www.slocleanair.org/air-quality-alerts.php>

4) If wildfire smoke is present

- If we are impacted this summer by wildfire smoke, anticipate that SLO County skies could be hazy and fine particulate (PM_{2.5}) concentrations and ozone to be higher than normal through the weekend. Depending on the fire and proximity, we may also see high levels of larger particulates (ash) as well.

If smoke is present and you smell smoke or see ash fall: Air District officials recommend that if you smell smoke or see ash, take precautions, and use common sense to reduce your exposure to smoke. All adults and children should:

- Head indoors and remain indoors, if possible
- Avoid strenuous outdoor activity
- Close all windows and doors that lead outside to prevent bringing additional smoke inside



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- Visit our website at SLOCleanAir.org for tips on how to develop a Clean Air Room in your home, or how to make an emergency DIY indoor air purifier.

These precautions are especially important for sensitive groups, including children, older adults, and people with existing respiratory illness and heart conditions, as they are particularly vulnerable to the health effects of poor air quality. Families with small children should be aware that even if adults in the household have no symptoms, children may experience symptoms due to their smaller body mass and developing lungs. If smoke increases, healthy people could be affected as well. If you experience a cough, shortness of breath, wheezing, exhaustion, light-headedness or chest pain, stop any outdoor activity immediately and seek medical attention. More information can be found at slocleanair.org/air-quality/wildfire