



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

City of Amarillo

Health Authority

Scott Milton, MD

Director

Casie Stoughton, MPH

Assistant Director

Carol Hill

Program Managers

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Andrea Kubitscheck

TB/Refugee

Laci Scott

Communicable Disease

Laurie Burton

Immunizations

Mickey Williams

Public Health Preparedness

Mark Price

Public Health Board

Kenneth Crossland, DDS

Kevin Hawkins

Judi Smith

Brenda Adams

Delores Thompson

Belinda Taylor

Rebecca Scott, MD

**City of Amarillo
Department of Public Health
Amarillo Bi-City, Bi-County Health District**

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Health Advisory

Due to the recent wildfires and continued dry and windy conditions, citizens are at an increased risk for smoke exposure. Prolonged inhalation of wildfire smoke can cause a range of health problems, from allergy symptoms to worsening of chronic heart and respiratory problems. If there is enough smoke in the air, breathing in smoke affects even healthy people. Those at higher risk of illness include older adults, children, pregnant women and people with chronic heart and lung disease. Health effects from breathing in smoke include:

- Coughing
- Difficulty breathing
- Burning eyes
- Runny nose
- Chest pain
- Headaches
- Fast heartbeat

Call your healthcare provider if your symptoms do not improve.

Steps to prevent harmful effects of smoke:

- Limit your time outside and stay indoors as much as possible.
- Use an air filter to clean indoor air.
- Keep windows and doors closed when possible.
- For those with a history of heart or lung problems, make a respiratory management plan with your doctor and follow your doctor's advice about medications.
- If it is necessary to be outdoors during smoky weather, wear a particulate mask such as N-95 or P-100 respirator. These are sold at many hardware and home repair stores.

There are hazards even after fires are extinguished.

- Heat sources from smoldering wood or other debris could cause fire again.
- Contact with something flammable or oxygen can re-ignite materials.
- Cleanup workers may be exposed to ash, soot and break-down products from burned material that may irritate airways and otherwise affect breathing.
- Spoiled and wet plants and other organic material can grow a lot of bacteria and mold during warm weather. Breathing bacteria and organic dust may cause lung disease.

- Use proper engineering controls to exhaust and replenish enough fresh air when working indoors.
- Use a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA)-type vacuum when cleaning dust. A typical household vacuum can put dust back into the air.
- When exposure to dust cannot be controlled or avoided, use a well-fitted, NIOSH-certified air-purifying respirator (such as an N-95 or more protective respirator) to reduce the effects of dust.
- As workers are exposed to smoke and burned material, minor cuts and burns may happen.

Remember these safety tips if you have to clean up after a fire:

- Never handle a downed power line.
- Assume all power lines are energized and call the power provider to de-energize the line(s).
- Use teams of two or more to move bulky objects.
- Do not work around any fire-damaged structure until it is examined and certified safe for work by a registered engineer or architect.
- Leave the structure immediately if it shifts or unusual noises signal a possible collapse.
- Wear appropriate protective clothing and respirators to avoid touching or breathing in vapors.
- Immediately clean all open wounds and cuts with soap and clean water.
- Remember to treat all burns.

Be Ready!

- Install a dual-sensor smoke alarm on each level of your home. Test monthly and change batteries.
- Radio: stay tuned to local radio, television, and reliable news information for instructions from local officials. If advised to evacuate – do so immediately!
- Windows/Vents: Close all windows, doors, vents, blind before evacuating.
- Go-Kit: Have a disaster supply kit ready take with you if you are evacuated.
- Escape Route: Have several planned escape routes away from your home – by car or foot.