



# News Release

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## Wildfires throughout Washington spark water and air quality concerns

**OLYMPIA** — Wildfires now cover about 273,000 acres of land in Washington, and state health officials warn of potential health risks from heavy smoke and compromised water systems.

Several areas affected by the wildfires are experiencing electrical outages that may cause water systems to lose pressure and may allow harmful contaminants into water lines. Residents who have lost water pressure should boil their tap water when service is restored. [Guidance for customers of affected water systems](#) can be found online.

In order to kill germs, water should be heated to a brisk boil for one minute and allowed to cool before use. The boil-water advisory remains in effect until tests show the water is again safe to drink. People uncertain as to whether their water is safe to drink should contact their water system.

It's also important that people in wildfire areas pay close attention to [current air quality information](#), which can be found on the Department of Ecology's website. Breathing smoke from wildfires can make anyone cough or wheeze, and people who have asthma or another lung disease may experience more severe symptoms. As pollutant particles build up in the respiratory system, they can cause several health problems including burning eyes, runny noses, and illnesses such as bronchitis.

The particles can also aggravate heart conditions and lung diseases like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, emphysema, and asthma. Children and older adults are also at higher risk for health effects from air pollution. Pregnant women and people with diabetes should also limit their exposure to smoke.

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During a smoke-related incident, it's recommended that you avoid physical activity and stay indoors with windows and doors closed. Turn on your air conditioner and keep the fresh-air intake closed and set the unit to recirculate. Use a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) to reduce indoor air pollution if one is available to you. The [Washington Tracking Network](#) has more detailed information on air pollution.

When smoke levels are high, even healthy people can have symptoms or health problems. Contact your health care provider when you have specific health concerns and dial 911 for emergency assistance if symptoms are serious.

Leave the area if instructed to do so by emergency personnel. You may consider leaving the area if it's too warm to be inside without open doors and windows and you don't have air conditioning.

The [Department of Health website](#) (doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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