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You can protect yourself from smoke hazards during wildfires

May 20, 2024 - [Environmental Health](#) - [Awareness](#)

SANTA FE — May is Wildfire Awareness Month and the New Mexico Department of Health (NMHealth) is urging New Mexicans to be prepared in the event of wildfires. Climate change has impacted New Mexico, with increased and persistent heat as well as strong winds. Both these conditions lead to an increased risk of wildfires, which directly affects human health.

During the 2022 Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon fire, reported asthma-related emergency department visits increased by 52% compared to the same time frame in 2021. As we approach this wildfire season, it is important to know how to protect yourself from wildfire risk as well as from smoke and deteriorating air quality.

“While many of us love spending time outdoors all over New Mexico, during wildfire season and prescribed burns the air quality can change rapidly,” said Patrick Allen, NMHealth Secretary. “There are some simple steps that you can take to protect yourself, your family and your home from fire and smoke.”

Here are a few ideas to protect your house:

- Stack firewood away from your house.
- Clean gutters, rake leaves and remove dead limbs from around your home.

- If there is a wildfire threat, use your garden hose to wet your roof and shrubs around your house.

Here are a few tips to help protect yourself and family members on smoky days:

- Use the [5-3-1 Visibility Tool](#), which helps you estimate air quality based on how far you can see outside during a wildfire.
- Listen to media channels and watch for [air quality reports](#) and health warnings about smoke.
- Stay indoors and keep the air clean by closing windows and doors. [Create a clean room](#) to help keep low levels of smoke and other particles.
- Do not use a swamp cooler on smoky days as the coolers bring smoky air indoors.
- Consider moving any planned outdoor events indoors.
- Reach out to those that may be impacted to ensure their safety.

For more information visit [NM Tracking – Fire, Smoke and Health](#).

Media Contact

We would be happy to provide additional information about this press release. Simply contact [David Barre](#) at (505) 699-9237 (Office) with your questions.

Versión en Español

En un esfuerzo para hacer que nuestros comunicados de prensa sean más accesibles, también tenemos disponibles una versión en español. Por favor presione el enlace de abajo para acceder a la traducción.

[Usted puede protegerse de los riesgos del humo durante los incendios forestales](#)