Jefferson County Public Health

www.jeffco.us/health

FACT SHEET: HEALTH THREAT FROM WILDFIRE SMOKE

Smoke from wildfires is a mixture of gases and fine particles from burning trees and other plant materials. Smoke can hurt your eyes, irritate your respiratory system, and worsen chronic heart and lung diseases.

HOW TO TELL IF SMOKE IS AFFECTING YOU

Smoke can cause— Coughing, a scratchy throat, irritated sinuses, shortness of breath, chest pain, headaches, stinging eyes, runny nose, asthma exacerbations, if you have heart or lung disease, smoke might make your symptoms worse.

People who have heart disease might experience—

- Chest pain, rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, fatigue

  Smoke may worsen symptoms for people who have pre-existing respiratory conditions, such as respiratory allergies, asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), in the following ways:

- Inability to breathe normally, cough with or without mucus , chest discomfort, wheezing and shortness of breath

When smoke levels are high enough, even healthy people may experience some of these symptoms.

ARE YOU AT RISK?

If you have heart or lung disease, such as congestive heart failure, angina, COPD, emphysema, or asthma, you are at higher risk of having health problems than healthy people.

Older adults are more likely to be affected by smoke, possibly because they are more likely to have heart or lung diseases than younger people.

Children are more likely to be affected by health threats from smoke because their airways are still developing and because they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults. Children also are more likely to be active outdoors.

PROTECT YOURSELF ... Limit your exposure to smoke.

Pay attention to local air quality reports. Listen and watch for news or health warnings about smoke. Citizens can call 303-758-4848 or check today's air **QUALITY** online to find out if a "Red" advisory is in effect.

Stay indoors to avoid smoke, keep indoor air as clean as possible. Keep windows and doors closed unless it is extremely hot outside. Run an air conditioner if you have one, but keep the fresh-air

intake closed and the filter clean to prevent outdoor smoke from getting inside. If you do not have an air conditioner and it is too warm to stay inside with the windows closed, seek shelter elsewhere.

Do not add to indoor pollution. When smoke levels are high, do not use anything that burns, such as candles, fireplaces, or gas stoves. Do not vacuum, because vacuuming stirs up particles already inside your home. Do not smoke, because smoking puts even more pollution into the air.

Follow your doctor's advice about medicines and about your respiratory management plan if you have asthma or another lung disease, Call your doctor if your symptoms worsen.

Do not rely on dust masks for protection. Paper "comfort" or "dust" masks commonly found at hardware stores are designed to trap large particles, such as sawdust. These masks will not protect your lungs from smoke. An “N95” mask, properly worn, will offer some protection. For more information about effective masks, see the Respirator Fact Sheet (http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2003-144/) provided by CDC’s National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

Additional Resources:

Colorado Department of Health and Enviroment Air Quaility Advisory (CDPHE)- http://www.colorado.gov/airquality/advisory.aspx

Centers for Disease Control wildfire information - http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/wildfires/

Jefferson County Public Health website – www.jeffco.us/health