



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Smoke and Prescribed Fire

Prescribed fire is a useful tool for reducing wildfire hazard and risk, protecting drinking water, improving wildlife habitat, and so much more. Fire officials utilize prescribed fire to meet land management objectives while aiming to reduce the impacts of future high-severity wildfire. Often, prescribed fire operations take place in the fall and spring to prepare for the coming wildfire season but can occur year-round if weather conditions allow for good burn conditions and smoke dispersal. These prescribed conditions help to ensure that the fire burns with a low-intensity and reduces the likelihood that heavy smoke will blow into nearby communities.



Photo: Blake Creagan, USDA Forest Service

SMOKE AND HEALTH IMPACTS

Smoke from prescribed fire and wildfires can impact our health, both physically and mentally. Some people may experience stress and anxiety related to the memories of past wildfires. Others will have physical symptoms related to smoke in the air, especially individuals with health conditions, children, and people over 65. It is important that we recognize the impacts of smoke exposure so that we can prepare in advance.

The back of this information sheet provides several effective ways that you can prepare for smoke to limit impacts on you and your home.

PREScribed FIRE SMOKE

Prescribed fire has many benefits to the ecosystem, including reducing the risk and impacts of high-severity wildfire. These planned fires reduce hazard associated with future wildfire, as well as potential smoke.


Months, sometimes years, of planning go into each prescribed fire. Staff must coordinate with local and state officials to ensure that conditions are safe for the firefighters and the public. Firefighters work with Air Quality and Public Health Officials to conduct prescribed burns when conditions will minimize smoke impacts to communities. However, some smoke is inevitable and part of living in a fire-dependent ecosystem.


Though prescribed fire does cause some smoke, it is smoke that we can plan for. A smaller, short-term amount of smoke today is better than long-term wildfire smoke later.


By staying in touch with local offices, you will have advance and day-of notification of Forest Service prescribed fire in your area.

STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR LOCAL OFFICE

San Juan National Forest
15 Burnett Ct.
Durango, CO 81301
(970) 247-4874

 fs.usda.gov/r02/sanjuan

 facebook.com/sanjuannationalforest

 x.com/sanjuannf

PROTECTING YOUR HEALTH DURING PRESCRIBED FIRE

- Stay indoors on ignition days, keep windows and doors shut.
- Make a smoke response plan for your vulnerable household members.
- Relocate to a cleaner air space during times of heavy smoke or on ignition days.
- Monitor the Air Quality Index (AQI). You can find the AQI for your area at airnow.gov.
- If you have an HVAC, install the highest- rated MERV filter your system can handle. MERV13 is recommended.
- Make a DIY air cleaner with a box fan to create a clean air space (see below).
- Keep indoor air as clean as possible.
- Be willing to change your outdoor plans on ignition days. Consider recreating in another area or postponing.
- Wear a tight-fitting N95 mask for extreme smoke or long periods of time outside.

SMOKE RESOURCES



R2 Smoke Resources
Research and air quality
information for the Rocky
Mountain Region



Fire and Smoke Map
Provides local, current air
quality data and smoke
maps for the US



Using the Air Quality
Index (AQI)
How to understand your
local AQI

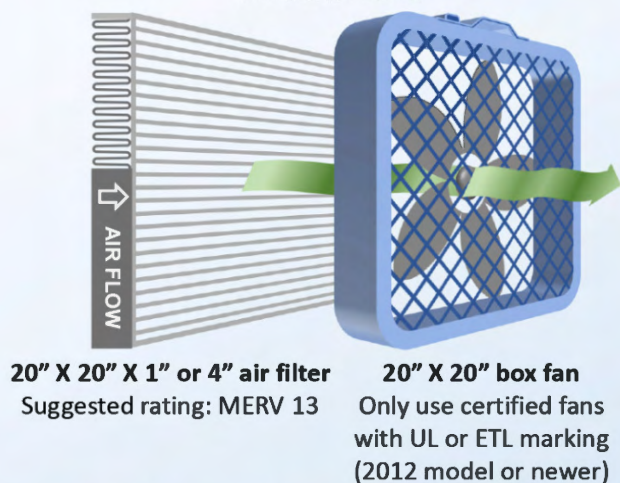


Wood Smoke and Your
Health
Information and
resources from EPA

BUILDING YOUR OWN AIR FILTER

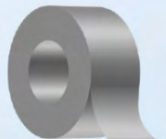
DIY Air Cleaner to Reduce Wildfire Smoke Indoors: Basic Design

Materials



Clamps

or



Duct Tape

or



Bungee Cords

Assembly

1. Attach the air filter to the back of the box fan using either clamps, duct tape or bungee cords.
2. Check the filter for the direction of the air flow (marked on the side of the filter).
3. Replace filters when dirty.

Learn about box fan safety tips:

<https://www.epa.gov/air-research/research-diy-air-cleaners-reduce-wildfire-smoke-indoors#FAQ>