



MEMBER ALERT

FIRE SMOKE

A concern that may be raised by members of the general public is whether they run an increased risk of cancer or of other chronic health conditions (e.g. heart disease) from short-term exposure to wildfire smoke. It is well characterized that smoke contains carcinogenic components with polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) comprising the largest percent, and to a lesser extent benzene and formaldehyde. People exposed to toxic air pollutants, such as the ones mentioned above, at sufficient concentrations and durations may have slightly increased risks of cancer or of experiencing other chronic health problems. **However, in general, the long-term risks from short-term smoke exposures are quite low.**

It is important to recognize that *not everyone* who is exposed to thick smoke from wildfires will have health problems. The level and duration of exposure, age, individual susceptibility, including the presence or absence of pre-existing lung (e.g., asthma, COPD) or heart disease, and other factors play significant roles in determining whether someone will experience smoke-related health problems. The types of potential individual responses should be discussed in public warnings about risks and the need to avoid exposure to smoke (Wildfire Smoke-Guide for Public Health Officers, 2016).

The JPA/SISC recommends that each county check with their county public health department on preventative measures and recommendations as each county may differ. In addition, please review your districts IIPP (Injury Illness Prevention Plan), as it may address issues of fire and smoke.

Please see the link below from CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) for additional information and best practices regarding wildfire smoke:

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/wildfires/smoke.html>