

## ***How can I prepare for smoky skies?***

You can prepare yourself, your family and your home for wildfire smoke events before they happen. The BC Centre for Disease Control has a handy [factsheet](#) that provides the information you need to:

- Have a plan in place for your health when air quality deteriorates.
- Reduce your exposure to wildfire smoke in your home (for example, by using a [portable air cleaner](#)).
- Reduce your smoke exposure if you have to be outside.
- Bookmark websites containing information about wildfire smoke.

You will also find some useful additional information and links specifically for the Lower Mainland below.

## ***Where can I find information about protecting the health of my family?***

Wildfire smoke can be harmful to your health, particularly if you have existing respiratory illness or other chronic medical conditions. Unborn children, infants, young children and the elderly are also more vulnerable. You can find out more about who is most at risk on the BC Centre for Disease Control's [Health Effects factsheet](#).

If you are experiencing symptoms and your community is blanketed by wildfire smoke, please seek the advice of your health care provider.

## ***How will I know if smoke is in the air?***

If wildfire smoke is transported into your community, you may notice a haze in the air. You may also notice that it is harder to see landmarks that would normally be visible on a clear day. Depending on how much smoke is in the area and where the smoke is located, you may also smell smoke. Transported wildfire smoke can sometimes be trapped in upper layers of the air, causing visual impacts despite air quality measurements on the ground remaining good. Online information can help you get a clearer picture about conditions:

- Smoke forecast maps including [BlueSky](#) and [FireWork](#)
- Fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) measurements reported on [airmap.ca](#) and [bcairquality.ca](#). PM<sub>2.5</sub> is the main constituent of wildfire smoke, and is the primary driver of smoke health impacts.
- The Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) reported on [airmap.ca](#), [bcairquality.ca](#) and weather forecast web sites
- Visual air quality ratings on [clearairbc.ca](#)
- [Highway webcam images](#)
- [Wildfire activity information from the BC Wildfire Service](#)

## ***What information will be available when the air gets smoky?***

Air quality advisories:

- Metro Vancouver issues an air quality advisory when air quality over a large portion of Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley Regional District temporarily deteriorates, or is expected to deteriorate soon.
- Air quality advisory notices describe the issue (e.g. wildfire smoke), the impacts it may have, and what everyone can do to protect their health and improve air quality.

- You can stay informed about air quality advisories through <https://tinyurl.com/MV-AQstatus> or <https://tinyurl.com/FVRD-AQ-Climate>.

Smoky skies bulletins:

- A smoky skies bulletin issued by BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy is a wildfire smoke notice issued for an identified zone or zones rather than a community-specific air quality advisory. It provides information about areas potentially impacted due to the highly variable nature of wildfire smoke. The bulletin zones are based on Environment and Climate Change Canada weather forecast zones.
- Air quality advisories (see above) are generally used in Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley Regional District rather than smoky skies bulletins, which are issued across the rest of the province.
- BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy uses the Howe Sound weather forecast zone, which includes a portion of northwestern Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Canyon weather forecast zone, which includes part of the Fraser Valley Regional District. If a smoky skies bulletin is issued for either of these zones before conditions to issue a Metro Vancouver/Fraser Valley Regional District air quality advisory have been met, it should not be interpreted as conflicting information; it just reflects how air quality advisories and wildfire smoke bulletins are issued in overlapping jurisdictions.

Special air quality statement:

- When an air quality advisory or smoky skies bulletin is in effect, Environment and Climate Change Canada will issue a special air quality statement.
- Information about the air quality advisory or smoky skies bulletin will be published on the Environment and Climate Change Canada weather page using a link in the banner on the page.

***How can I stay up to date about fire activity, smoke and air quality?***

Bookmark web pages containing relevant information. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

- Metro Vancouver
  - Follow Metro Vancouver on Twitter <https://twitter.com/MetroVancouver> or Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/metrovancouver/>.
  - Subscribe to the Metro Vancouver air quality advisories and bulletins email list: <https://tinyurl.com/MV-mailinglist>.
  - Use [airmap.ca](http://airmap.ca).
  - Visit the MV air quality status web site: <https://tinyurl.com/MV-AQstatus>.
- Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD)
  - Check out our Air Quality page on the FVRD website: <https://tinyurl.com/FVRD-AQ-Climate>.
  - Follow the FVRD on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/MyFVRD/> or Twitter: <https://twitter.com/FVRD1>.
- BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (BC ENV)
  - Bookmark the BC ENV air quality advisories webpage for smoky skies bulletins: <https://tinyurl.com/BC-AQadvisories>. It is updated at least once every 24 hours when fires are actively burning.
  - Bookmark the BC ENV webpage for current Air Quality Health Index readings and health-specific messaging for smoky conditions: <https://tinyurl.com/BC-AQHI>.

- Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
  - Bookmark the BC FireWork smoke forecast from ECCC, which shows predicted ground-level PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations over the next 48 hours: [https://weather.gc.ca/firework/index\\_e.html](https://weather.gc.ca/firework/index_e.html).
  - Bookmark the current Air Quality Health Index page to get health-specific messaging for smoky conditions: <https://tinyurl.com/ECCC-AQHI>.
- BC Wildfire Service
  - Bookmark the BC Wildfire Service map of active fires to keep track of the provincial wildfire situation: <https://tinyurl.com/BC-wildfiremap>.

***Who should I contact for more information about air quality during wildfire smoke events?***

- Metro Vancouver: [aqinfo@metrovancover.org](mailto:aqinfo@metrovancover.org) or 604-432-6200
- Fraser Valley Regional District: [environment@fvrd.ca](mailto:environment@fvrd.ca) or 604-702-5000
- BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy: [AQReporting@gov.bc.ca](mailto:AQReporting@gov.bc.ca) or contact the air quality meteorologist identified on the smoky skies bulletin
- Environment and Climate Change Canada: 1-900-565-5555 (now toll free)