

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Riverside County Public Health Officials Urge Residents to Take Precautions Due to Smoke and Ash from Wildfires

RIVERSIDE, CA (May 20, 2026) – Riverside County wildfires are generating smoke and ash that is blanketing the skies over parts of Riverside County, creating unhealthy air quality and prompting health warnings.

Wildfire smoke can cause a range of symptoms, which include burning eyes, runny nose, shortness of breath, scratchy throat, headaches and chest pains.

“As smoke drifts into surrounding areas, it can present a danger to our health. It’s important to monitor your local air quality and take precautions, particularly for those with chronic health conditions that impact their heart and lungs,” said Dr. Jennifer Chevinsky, Riverside County Public Health Officer.

People at heightened risk include pregnant women, children, older adults, first responders, people who work outdoors, unhoused populations and those with chronic health conditions such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), heart disease, diabetes and chronic kidney disease.

Dr. Chevinsky recommends the following protective measures:

- Monitor your local air quality through [South Coast AQMD](#).
- Reduce time spent outdoors and the intensity of outdoor activity during unhealthy air quality conditions.
- If you must go outdoors, consider wearing an N95 or P100 mask.
- Keep your indoor air healthy by closing doors and windows.
- Run air conditioning on the recirculate setting or use a portable HEPA air cleaner for improved air circulation throughout the home.
- If you experience symptoms like severe coughing, shortness of breath, wheezing, chest pain, palpitations, nausea or unusual fatigue, contact

your health care provider or go to urgent care. For life-threatening symptoms, call 911.

For schools and recreational programs in smoke-impacted areas, see the California Department of Education [Memo: Get Smart about Wildfire Smoke - Clear Guidelines for Schools and Wildfire Smoke](#) and the California Environmental Protection Agency's [Guidance for Schools During Wildfire Smoke Events](#).

Officials also stress the importance of having an evacuation plan and following evacuation instructions for the safety of all residents living in affected areas. Visit rivcoready.org for the latest fire information and sign up for emergency alerts at www.RivCoReady.org/AlertRivCo.

For more information, visit <https://ruhealth.org/news/air-quality-and-psps-outages-public-health-recommendations> or for general public health information, www.ruhealth.org/ruhs-public-health.

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About Riverside University Health System – Public Health

Riverside University Health System – Public Health (RUHS - PH) serves as Riverside County's public health department. RUHS-PH offers a range of services and programs to promote and protect the health of all county residents and visitors in service of the well-being of the community. RUHS includes the 439-bed Medical Center in Moreno Valley, Calif., 14 Community Health Centers across Riverside County, and Behavioral Health, which provides emergency and inpatient psychiatric care. Visit www.ruhealth.org to learn more.