



Emergency safety: Air quality

Poor air quality from a wildfire, dust, or pollution can worsen or cause:

- Asthma and other respiratory distress.
- Cardiovascular Issues (heart strain and blood pressure spikes).
- Irritation of the eyes, nose, and throat.

Before an emergency

Install and maintain alarms

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, inside bedrooms, and outside sleeping areas.
- Install carbon monoxide (CO) detectors on every level.
- Test all alarms monthly and replace batteries twice a year.

What you can do to prepare for poor outdoor air quality due to wildfire or pollution



Stock up on air filters

Purchase high-efficiency HVAC filters (rated MERV 13 or higher) or a portable HEPA air cleaner.



Seal gaps

Make sure windows and doors have functional weather stripping to prevent outdoor air from getting in the house.



N95 masks

Keep a supply of N95 or P100 respirators on hand. Cloth masks and surgical masks do not protect you from fine wildfire smoke particles.

During an emergency

Maintain indoor air quality

- Keep windows closed: Keep all windows and doors shut unless it becomes dangerously hot inside.
- Recirculate air: Set your AC or HVAC system to "recirculate" so it doesn't pull in smoky or contaminated air from outside.
- Avoid indoor pollutants: Do not burn candles, use gas stoves, or vacuum (which stirs up settled dust) during a bad air event.



Monitor local guidance

- Check the AQI (Air Quality Index) on the weather app regularly.
- Follow [APPLETREE guidance](#) for specific Utah-based wildfire air pollution updates.

Safe cleanup (after a wildfire)

- Wet cleaning: Use damp cloths to wipe down surfaces rather than dry dusting, which pushes ash back into the air.
- Protect your skin: Wear gloves, long sleeves, and pants when you clean up ash or debris.
- Check vents: Replace your HVAC filters immediately once the outdoor air is clear. It's likely they collected a high volume of pollutants during the event.

Contact your local health department with any questions.