



COLORADO

Department of Public
Health & Environment

Health Alert Network (HAN) Broadcast

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From: CO-CDPHE

Subject: HAN Advisory – Wildfire smoke and poor air quality event | July 1, 2026

Recipients:

Recipient Instructions: LPHAs –

Healthcare providers – distribute widely in your office

HAN Advisory | Wildfire smoke and poor air quality event | July 1, 2026

This information is for healthcare providers and key public health partners involved in managing public health issues. Most CDPHE HANs can be found on the [CDPHE Colorado Health Alert Network](#) webpage.

Key points

- Smoke from wildfires across Colorado, Utah, and other parts of the desert southwest are degrading air quality (AQ) in the state. Ground-level fine particle (PM_{2.5}) concentrations range from moderate to hazardous intermittently for various areas of Colorado, according to [airnow.gov](#).
- Elevated PM_{2.5} can be harmful for everyone and may increase visits to healthcare facilities. Concurrent exposure to poor air quality and extreme heat can also negatively impact health. Preliminary syndromic surveillance data indicate higher than expected numbers of emergency department visits related to severe asthma on June 22 and June 25, as well as smoke inhalation-related emergency department visits on June 28.
- Note that the severity and area of coverage for this AQ event may change. Providers should [sign up for AQ alerts](#) and continue to monitor current air

quality and fire conditions online: [EPA's Fire and Smoke Map](#) and Colorado [Smoke Blog](#). Heat conditions can be monitored on the [CDC HeatRisk webpage](#), which also includes current AirNow AQ readings.

- Providers should counsel patients on how to use these resources to track quickly changing AQ conditions, explain behavior modification options during a poor AQ event (see below), and when to seek emergency care. Prescribe adequate medication refills and update action plans for asthma and other impacted underlying conditions; determine treatment plans in case of evacuation, such as medication go-kits and dialysis or infusion planning.
 - During this time, if emergency medical services (EMS) are experiencing a lack of resources or capacity, reach out to your Regional Emergency Medical and Trauma Services Advisory Councils (RETAC), Office of Emergency Management (OEM), or Healthcare Coalitions (HCC) to determine activation of additional support mechanisms.
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Background information

Smoke from wildfires across Utah, Colorado, and other parts of the desert southwest are degrading air quality (AQ) in the state. Wildfire smoke increases the potential for fine particulate matter, also known as particulate matter less than 2.5 micrometers in size (PM2.5), to accumulate at the ground level. This increases the likelihood of inhalation exposure to PM2.5. Wildfire smoke is a complex mixture of gaseous pollutants (carbon monoxide), hazardous air pollutants (e.g., polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons), water vapor, and particle pollution. Particle pollution, specifically PM2.5, is the main component of wildfire smoke and the primary public health threat.

On June 29, 2026, ground-level fine particles (PM2.5) concentrations were ranging from moderate to hazardous intermittently in various parts of the state, according to [AirNow](#). Smoke conditions can change quickly and frequent monitoring is needed.

Some people may be highly affected by poor air quality and at a higher risk of health impacts, including:

- People with asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), or cardiovascular disease (e.g., ischemic heart disease, congestive heart failure)
- Children
- Older adults
- People who are pregnant

In addition to sensitive groups, healthy adults who work or exert themselves outdoors may also notice health effects. Symptoms can range from mild to severe, and include: headache, eye and mucous membrane irritation, dyspnea (trouble breathing), cough, wheezing, chest pain, palpitations, and fatigue.

Appropriate and prompt treatment is crucial to reduce morbidity from wildfire smoke exposure. Counseling patients on protective measures, including being aware of current and predicted air quality levels, staying indoors, [using air filtration](#), and [using properly fitted N95 respirators when outdoors \(Spanish version\)](#) is also important for mitigating adverse effects.

Recommendations/guidance for healthcare providers

- Proactively counsel patients on [strategies to avoid or reduce smoke exposure](#), especially among individuals with asthma, COPD, or cardiovascular disease, children, older adults, and pregnant people. In-home portable HEPA air cleaners or a [do-it-yourself air cleaner](#) can reduce smoke pollution and help create a “cleaner air space” indoors. Contact 2-1-1 for help locating designated clean air spaces.
- Advise patients at higher risk for severe outcomes to monitor their symptoms more closely, and ensure that their medication prescriptions are up to date and available. Create a [heat](#) and wildfire action plan for patients to use at home, and update asthma action plans to provide guidance for patients during poor air quality days.

- For patients who are very near the fire source who may have burns and/or smoke inhalation injury, follow [Advanced Trauma Life Support \(ATLS\) guidelines](#) and consult your [regional burn center](#). Consider the need for transfer to a burn center, and work with local EMS and RETACs for destination guidelines.
- Monitor healthcare capacity closely, and plan for a possible increase in patient visits due to asthma, COPD, metabolic, and cardiovascular disease exacerbations. Exposure to wildfire smoke may also [increase mental health ED visits](#). Preparation may include staffing upsurge, specialist capabilities, and equipment inventory (e.g., respiratory therapists and equipment, and stock of medications such as albuterol nebulizers, steroids, and magnesium).
- Consider continuity planning and emergency preparedness in the event that healthcare services are disrupted or patients are displaced during wildfires (e.g., access to dialysis or infusion centers, specialists appointments, medication refills). Consider telemedicine options when possible. [HealthcareReady](#) has a healthcare infrastructure map that outlines the closest hospitals, pharmacies, and dialysis centers. [RXOpen](#) provides maps of pharmacies that are open to ensure access to critical medications during natural disasters and public health emergencies.
- For patients experiencing acute stress, anxiety, grief, or other mental health symptoms, the following resources can be used to access short- and long-term behavioral health services:
 - [OwnPath Care Directory and Colorado LIFTS](#): connects people to affordable mental health, substance use, and crisis support in their area. Call 1-844-CO-LIFTS (265-4387) to connect with a care navigator.
 - [Colorado 988](#): For immediate crisis support, call or text 988 for free, 24/7 support.
 - [IMatter](#): Youth 18 years and younger (and 21 and younger for those receiving special education services) are connected with a licensed therapist for up to six free counseling sessions.
 - [Health First Colorado](#) offers regional organizations to help members access behavioral health services in their area.

- Use [activity guidance](#) to support decisions to postpone, relocate, or cancel outdoor activities and events, if applicable to the provider role.
- Ensure post-wildfire event counseling is addressed, including advising patients who have been impacted by fires on how to stay safe while [cleaning up ash](#). It is also important for first responders and evacuated residents to be sure they are [up to date on the tetanus vaccine](#). As cleanup and recovery efforts begin, there is an increased risk of injury, and tetanus is a concern for anyone with open or closed wounds.

More information

[AirNow.gov](#)

CDPHE: [Colorado Smoke Blog](#)

CDC: [Wildfires](#)

CDC: [Community Respirators and Masks](#)

CDC: Wildfire smoke [guidance for public health officials and professionals](#)

[Wildfire Smoke and Your Patients' Health](#) (web-based training for clinicians)

CDPHE: [Wildfire Smoke Preparedness Program](#) (includes guidance on setting up cleaner indoor air spaces/protecting indoor air quality during smoke events)

[Ready.gov](#): [Build A Kit](#)

[Behavioral health resources for families, caregivers, and children](#)

- [988 Colorado Mental Health Line is available for free, immediate, human support 24/7. If you or someone you know is struggling with an emotional, mental health, or substance use concern, call, text, or live chat with 988.](#)
- [I Matter Colorado connects youth 18 and younger \(and 21 and younger for those receiving special education services\) with a licensed therapist for up to six free counseling sessions.](#)
- [Parent Guidelines for Helping Children Impacted by Wildfires – English](#)
- [Parent Guidelines for Helping Children Impacted by Wildfires – Spanish](#)
- [Addressing the Wildfires: A resource guide for Caregivers and Educators – English](#)

- [Wildfire Family Guide – English](#): A Sesame Street Workbook for families impacted by wildfires
- [Wildfire Family Guide – Spanish](#)
- [Coping with the Stress of Wildfire Smoke Fact sheet – English](#)

Keeping up to date

[Register for CDC HANs](#)

[Sign up for Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity \(COCA\) calls and emails](#)

[Register for Colorado HANs](#)

CDPHE Disease Reporting Line: 303-692-2700 or 303-370-9395 (after hours)