

# Wildfires in western US, Canada create hazardous air conditions

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Wildfires raging in several states and Canada are triggering air quality alerts and evacuation orders across the western parts of the United States.

Smoke and haze have filled the skies in California, Oregon, Arizona, Washington and several other western states: As of Wednesday, there were 79 large, active [wildfires](#) that have burned over 1.4 million acres across the country, according to the [National Interagency Fire Center](#).

Evacuation orders are in effect for 15 fires in the Northwest, the Associated Press reported.

Meanwhile, Canada is battling about 430 active wildfires in British Columbia and 177 in neighboring Alberta, including two that led to the evacuation of up to 25,000 visitors and residents of the Canadian Rockies' largest national park, the AP reported.

To deal with the pollution spewing from these wildfires, air quality alerts and advisories have been issued in many parts of the western United States:

- The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality issued [air quality alerts](#) for the eastern counties of Harney, Malheur, Grant, Baker and Morrow until further notice.
- In Idaho, [air quality advisories](#) were sent out to the central counties of Ada, Canyon, Gem, Owyhee, Payette and Washington.
- In [north central Washington](#), the Colville Reservation, all of Chelan County, plus the Methow Valley down to Brewster in Okanogan County were under air quality alerts until further notice.
- Last but not least, Canadian authorities [issued an air quality advisory](#) for Calgary, Alberta due to the wildfire smoke.

To stay safe, people should start by learning about air quality conditions and forecasts in their area.

Those with an air conditioning system should change filters often, with high-efficiency filters being the most effective at removing smoke particles, the AP reported. Portable air purifiers also help.

During periods of unhealthy air, people should stay indoors with windows and doors closed. If you have to be outside, a respirator mask such as an N-95 or P-100 can offer some protection, the AP reported.

Children and those with heart or lung issues can be more sensitive to unhealthy air.

When cleaning up after a wildfire, wear goggles and a snug respirator mask such as an N-95 or P-100. Avoid [skin contact](#) with ash by wearing gloves, closed-toe shoes, socks and long pants and shirts, the AP reported.

Wash ash from pets and outdoor belongings like cars and toys. Mist floors with water and gently sweep or mop, then collect ash in plastic bags and throw it out.

**More information:** Ready.gov has more on [wildfires](#).

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