

## What is in smoke?

When wood and other organic matter burn, they produce smoke, a complex mixture of gases and fine particles. Ash is deposited on the ground, and often stirred up into the air by winds.

One of the biggest health threats from smoke comes from fine particles. These microscopic particles can get into your eyes and respiratory system, where they can cause health problems such as burning eyes, runny nose, and illnesses such as bronchitis.

Fine particles also can aggravate chronic heart and lung diseases.

Other pollutants in smoke include: cancer-causing substances, including benzene, formaldehyde and polycyclic organic matter; carbon monoxide, which reduces the blood's ability to supply oxygen to tissues; and nitrogen oxides (NOx) and hydrocarbons, both involved in the formation of ozone, a principal component of smog.

See inside for tips on how to minimize your exposure to smoke.

## Air Quality Advisories

**Air Quality Watch:** when there is potential for poor air quality in some portion of the County.

**Air Quality Warning:** when there is already poor air quality in some portion of the County.

Subscribe to Air Quality Advisories at:  
[www.OurAir.org](http://www.OurAir.org)

## Protecting Our Air

The Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District (District) is a local government agency that works to protect the people and the environment of Santa Barbara County from harmful effects of air pollution.

We are an independent special district, responsible for controlling air pollution from business and industry sources (we do not regulate motor vehicles). Our jurisdiction covers the entire County including the incorporated cities of Buellton, Carpinteria, Goleta, Guadalupe, Lompoc, Santa Barbara, Santa Maria, and Solvang.

## Visit [www.OurAir.org](http://www.OurAir.org)

- View Today's Air Quality
- Find out about funding programs
- Subscribe to our newsletter, and to Air Quality Advisories
- Access permitting and compliance info
- Find out what you can do for cleaner air.

## Phone Numbers

Main Number .....	961-8800
<i>(general information and complaints)</i>	
Public Information & Media .....	961-8833
Business Assistance .....	961-8868
Recorded Information .....	961-8802
Clerk of the Board .....	961-8853



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[www.OurAir.org](http://www.OurAir.org)



## About Our Air

# Smoke and Ash and Your Health



Santa Barbara County  
Air Pollution Control District

[www.OurAir.org](http://www.OurAir.org)



## Minimize Your Exposure

If you smell smoke or see a lot of particles and ash in the air, use common sense.



- Limit time spent outside and avoid outdoor exercise.
- Close windows and doors to keep indoor air clean unless it is extremely hot.

- If you have an air conditioner, run it with the fresh air intake closed and the filter clean. If you have a "whole house fan," turn it off when the air quality is poor.
- Call your doctor if you have symptoms of lung or heart disease that may be related to exposure to smoke or particles (i.e. repeated coughing, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, wheezing, chest tightness or pain, palpitations, nausea or unusual fatigue or lightheadedness).
- Talk to your doctor about whether and when you should leave the area. When smoke is heavy for a prolonged period of time, fine particles can build up indoors even if you can't see them.
- If ash is falling: (1) avoid skin contact with it, (2) avoid stirring it up through cleanup activities, and (3) avoid exercising outdoors.

## More Ideas

- When air quality improves, air out your home. Be prepared to close windows and doors again if air quality worsens.
- Go somewhere nearby where the air is better for a while, even if you can't leave your home for a longer period.
- Visit [www.sbcfire.com](http://www.sbcfire.com) to make a plan, and create "defensible space" around your home.

## Cleaning up Ash & Soot

- If you have heart or lung problems, don't cleanup ash or soot.
- Avoid skin contact with the ash.
- Don't use leaf blowers!
- Use damp cloths and spray lightly with water. Direct ash-filled water to ground areas and away from the runoff system.
- Use vacuums with HEPA filters or if possible, similar industrial ones with disposable collection filter bags. Sweeping gently with a broom is another option.
- Take your car to the car wash.
- Wash off toys.
- Clean ash off pets.



## Top Tips

## Cleaner Fireplace Burning



Here are some tips for cleaner fireplace burning:

1. Use a gas log if you can.
2. Be a good neighbor – notice your smoke.
3. Burn dry, seasoned wood; build small hot fires, not large smoldering ones.
4. Don't burn trash, plastics, chemicals or coated papers (i.e. wrapping paper, magazines or junk mail).
5. Regularly clean your chimney with a certified chimney sweep.
6. NEVER use gasoline, charcoal lighter or other fuel to light or relight a fire because the vapors can explode.
7. NEVER leave a fire unattended.
8. Don't hang or decorate your mantel with flammable materials.
9. Have basic fire safety equipment nearby.
10. Save your fireplace or woodstove for special occasions. Instead, use a central heating system, which is the safest, cleanest (for the air) and most efficient way to heat your home.