

Protecting Kids from Wildfire Smoke: Actions for California Schools Communications Toolkit

Every year, about 7.4 million children across the United States are affected by wildfire smoke. A large proportion of these kids are in California. Smoke exposure causes more than short-term health impacts, such as trouble breathing, increased asthma attacks, chest pain, dizziness, and increased risk for upper respiratory infections – researchers are increasingly also finding long-term consequences, including reduced immune system functioning, changes in DNA, and increases in blood pressure that can all lead to cardiovascular and lung diseases later in life.

The bottom line: as smoke and wildfire seasons intensify, investment in school infrastructure and education campaigns are urgently needed to protect kids' health.

Partners from across the state have developed a [fact sheet](#) supporting schools in implementing best practices and improving their infrastructure to reduce kids' smoke exposure. Deadlines for a few key funding sources are fast approaching – providing schools an opportunity to start planning for future wildfire seasons.

This communications toolkit supports key partners in disseminating this fact sheet. Below are draft messages for newsletters and social media. Graphics for social media and other communications are available [here](#).

This project is supported by the [Action Lab for Planetary Health](#) (ALPHA), based at [Stanford Center for Innovation in Global Health](#) – and researchers from Stanford's [Sean N. Parker Center for Allergy and Asthma Research](#), the [Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment](#), and [Stanford Health Care](#). Other key partners include: the [Western States Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit](#) (WSPEHSU), the [American Academy of Pediatrics California](#), the [Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment](#), the [Regional Asthma Management Program](#) (RAMP), the [Sonoma County Office of Education](#), the [Washington Unified School District](#), and [Schools for Climate Action](#).

Newsletters:

- This wildfire season was one of the worst in California's history, with smoke reaching historic levels in many parts of the state. While schools often close when air quality is poor, this isn't always the best solution – especially from an environmental justice perspective. This [fact sheet](#) outlines key actions for California schools, along with possible funding sources for upgrading air quality infrastructure (deadlines quickly approaching). More information is also available [here](#).
- As researchers uncover greater health consequences of wildfire smoke exposure, especially in youth, California schools are being called on to adapt, improving infrastructure to protect kids against this and other impending climate impacts on health. Partners from across the state have produced this [fact sheet](#) to support schools in taking action now to prepare for future wildfire seasons. More information is also available [here](#).
- Deadlines for funding sources that can help schools develop smoke-resilient infrastructure are quickly approaching. This [fact sheet](#) summarizes best practices and considerations for schools to prepare for the future wildfire seasons. More information is also available [here](#).

Social media:

- #Wildfire smoke harms health – especially for kids. On a rapidly changing planet, we need to take measures to protect the next generation. As a first step – and critical equity solution – schools need to provide #cleanair and safe learning environments. Learn more: globalhealth.stanford.edu/wildfirefacts
- #Wildfire smoke may be as much as 10x more dangerous for kids than other forms of #airpollution. Exposure can create genetic changes w/ long-term immune, lung & cardiovascular impacts. Learn more about what parents and schools can do now to prepare for future seasons: globalhealth.stanford.edu/wildfirefacts
- Schools play a key role in keeping kids safe during wildfire season – especially kids who don't have #cleanair or good learning environments at home. Learn more about what schools can do – and what funding is available now: globalhealth.stanford.edu/wildfirefacts
- #Wildfire smoke contains fine, inhalable particles called PM2.5, as well as dangerous levels of heavy metals & other toxins. By upgrading HVAC systems, installing air purifiers & monitoring indoor air quality, schools can help keep kids safe. Learn more: globalhealth.stanford.edu/wildfirefacts

- Funding deadlines for schools to improve resilience to #wildfire smoke are quickly approaching. Learn more about best practices and possible funding opportunities: globalhealth.stanford.edu/wildfirefacts

Partner social media handles:

- Stanford Center for Innovation in Global Health: @StanfordCIGH
- Western States PEHSU: @WSPEHSU
- Sean N Parker Center for Allergy and Asthma Research: @StanfordAllergy
- Woods Institute for the Environment: @StanfordWoods
- Stanford Health Care: @StanfordHealth
- American Academy of Pediatrics California: @AAPCADocs
- Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA): @OEHHA
- Sonoma County Office of Education: @scoesonoma
- Regional Asthma Management and Prevention: @RAMPasthma
- Washington Unified School District: @Wusdk12
- Schools for Climate: @Schools4Climate

Other key resources:

- Information on protecting kids' health in wildfires from WSPEHSU: bit.ly/3ENkEvJ
- Information on school ventilation and filtration from UC Davis: bit.ly/3iAu7gS
- Information from CARB on staying safe in wildfires, including resources on masks and air filters: bit.ly/3s3dVbi
- CARB-certified air cleaning devices: bit.ly/37zwrhU
- AQMD guidebook on air quality sensors: bit.ly/3wyg3tP
- Wildfire preparedness for K-12 schools from REMS: bit.ly/3yCpGla
- Fire and smoke map and other key resources: airnow.gov/fires
- Ready.gov information on wildfires: ready.gov/wildfires
- EPA information on indoor air quality: bit.ly/37lyKPK
- ALA information on clean air at schools: bit.ly/2VLwepT
- ALA guide on improving indoor air quality in schools: bit.ly/3HNee1d
- ALA considerations for asthma: bit.ly/3scuFwQ
- Resource on the impacts of wildfires on minorities from The Nature Conservancy: bit.ly/3ijdu2M
- California Department of Education activity guidelines: bit.ly/3fRyXof
- Resources from the CDE's Emergency Services Team: bit.ly/3iRnTtn