

## Air Shelters During Wildfires

### Wildfire Smoke

There are negative health effects associated with breathing smoky air. Wildfire smoke contains particulate matter and when we breathe it into our lungs it can cause health problems. This is especially problematic for those with breathing, heart, and circulation illnesses (e.g. asthma, heart failure).

Healthy people can also be affected, particularly pregnant women, children and the elderly. Other members of the community at greater risk include people without homes, and outdoor workers. The fire does not have to be close for you to be affected. If the skies are smoky, you could be at risk.



#### People Most At Risk

- People with breathing or heart problems
- Pregnant women
- Children
- The elderly

### Clean Air Shelters and Sheltering in Place

A **Clean Air Shelter** is a room, area, or building that has an air filtration system that reduces the amount of pollution from wildfire smoke. During smoky skies seek a clean air shelter. Other recommendations include staying indoors and reducing your activity level.

If you have air conditioning, set it to re-circulate, and keep windows and doors closed. To improve the air quality in your home you can install a High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filtration system. This could be a standalone unit appropriate to the size of room it is in, or could be added to your home's heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system. This installation should be done by a professional.

If you do not have an air conditioning system, you can remain indoors with the windows and doors closed. Depending on the air-tightness of your home, smoke may still find its way in over time and be equal or worse quality than the outdoor air. If the temperature inside gets too high you may increase the risk of heat related illness. If this is this case, you should seek shelter elsewhere.

Buildings within municipalities such as shopping malls and civic centres may have appropriate cooling and air filtration equipment to provide temporary relief during smoky sky events.

For more information, visit the Interior Health webpage at [www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca)

**Have a plan  
in place!**