




air pollution control district
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

Agenda Item: G-2
Agenda Date: June 15, 2023
Agenda Placement: Regular
Estimated Time: 15 minutes
Continued Item: No

Board Agenda Item

TO: Air Pollution Control District Board

FROM: Aeron Arlin Genet, Air Pollution Control Officer 

CONTACT: Lyz Bantilan, Public Information Officer, (805) 979-8283

SUBJECT: Wildfire Smoke Preparedness

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file a presentation on wildfire smoke preparedness.

BACKGROUND:

With wildfire season on the horizon, the District will share information about our outreach efforts related to helping the community prepare for wildfire smoke impacts.

DISCUSSION:

Santa Barbara County has experienced many wildfires, and increasingly, we have experienced smoke transport from wildfires burning outside of our county boundaries, even from hundreds of miles away. Smoke and ash from wildfires contain very small particles known as particulate matter. These particles harm the lungs and heart, and can cause coughing, wheezing, difficulty breathing, chest pain, nausea, and in severe instances, premature mortality. People with heart or lung disease, seniors, kids, and pregnant women are especially sensitive to smoke. The best protection against wildfire smoke is to stay indoors as much as possible when smoke is present, which emphasizes the importance of keeping indoor air clean.

In recent years, the District has increasingly encouraged the use of high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) devices during wildfires, through joint Air Quality Alerts with County Public Health, media interviews, social media posts, and in conjunction with our Clean Air Rooms Pilot Program. Use of a HEPA device to create a “clean air room” – ideally, in a room where you spend a lot of

Aeron Arlin Genet, Air Pollution Control Officer

time, like a bedroom – ensures that the home has a dedicated space with safe indoor air quality during smoke events.

With windows and doors closed and sealed tightly, (HEPA) devices can reduce particulate matter indoors by more than 90 percent. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) maintains a list of HEPA devices approved for sale in the state: <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/list-carb-certified-air-cleaning-devices>.

This year, the District will again conduct outreach about “clean air rooms” and other ways for community members to protect their health during wildfire smoke events, as well as related outreach about how to interpret air quality data and how to sign up to receive Air Quality Alerts. The District will work with partners to share this information through a variety of platforms and across languages (English and Spanish, and Mixteco when possible).

This presentation will provide an overview of all the air quality information and resources the District has readily available to assist individuals when our region is affected by smoke from wildfires. In addition to our inter-agency coordinated Air Quality Alerts, text messages, and social media posts, the District’s involvement with daily forecast conditions, coordination with school districts, and expansive monitoring network are all critical components of our response when impacted by wildfire smoke.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The costs for the efforts and activities described above are included in the budget approved by your Board. There are no additional fiscal impacts.