Printable Wildfire Resources for Communities
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Emergency Contacts and Supports for Individuals, Families and Communities

The 2021 wildfire season has arrived early in BC with devastating consequences. At the time of this publication, a number of First Nations communities continue to be under evacuation orders or alerts. The FNHA is working with local, regional and provincial emergency service partners to coordinate services and supports.

If you are evacuated and need assistance...

1. Go to your nearest evacuation reception centre
The reception centre will be listed on your evacuation order. First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) team members are available at many centres to help community members to access culturally-safe supports.

For a list of evacuation alerts and orders, or information on how to find a reception centre, call the provincial Emergency Support Services line at 1-800-585-9559 or go to emergencyinfobc.gov.bc.ca/wildfires-2021. The support line is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

2. Register for Emergency Support Services
People who are on evacuation alert or ordered to evacuate can register to receive Emergency Support Services from the Province of BC. If your local emergency program asks you to self-register, you can do it easily using the Evacuation Registration Assistance tool at ess.gov.bc.ca. It’s important to register even if you don’t need accommodation.

Help to Reunite with Loved Ones and Family Members

If you are looking for someone that has been impacted or displaced by wildfires, or you want your loved ones to know that you are okay, call the Canadian Red Cross Family Reunification line at 1-800-863-6582. This service is available from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week.

FNHA Environmental Health Officers (EHOs)

The FNHA’s Environmental Health Officers can support communities to navigate emergency wildfire response pathways and access supplies and services. Community leaders are encouraged to contact their Regional EHO between 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday to Friday. After hours, call 1-844-666-0711 or email ephs.afterhours@fnha.ca Learn more at fnha.ca/what-we-do/environmental-health.
Wildfire Smoke

Air Cleaning and Clean Air Shelters

The FNHA has a limited number of portable air cleaners / purifiers available for First Nations people who are at high risk of illness from wildfire smoke.

For more information, and for advice on how to create clean air shelters for people affected by smoke, visit fnha.ca/wildfire.

For the latest air quality readings in the province, visit bcairquality.ca/readings.

FNHA Environmental Health Officers are available to support the development of clean air shelters. They are currently contacting all impacted First Nations. Contact your local Environmental Health Officer through the FNHA Regional Office with any questions.

Cooling Centres

In times of extreme or extended periods of above average temperatures, communities can set up cooling centers in local common spaces. These are usually set up as needed and are advertised on local channels, such as social media, town webpages, newspapers and community information boards.

If you need to find a cooling center, please contact the community center or band office nearest to you.

Highways Conditions and Road Closures

To check if routes are clear for travel, follow @DriveBC on Twitter or visit drivebc.ca.

Wellness and Mental Health Supports

FNHA recognizes and acknowledges the unique trauma to First Nations, which goes beyond loss of home or cherished valuables. During this stressful time, the FNHA is committed to keeping access open to health benefits and services.

Many people displaced by fires may have lost access to life-sustaining health services, including medications. To contact Health Benefits about coverage for health and wellness services, medical transportation or medical supplies and equipment, call 1-855-550-5454 between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.
For more information on health and wellness supports for evacuees, please visit fnha.ca/wildfire.

For non-emergency health information and services visit HealthLinkBC.ca or call 8-1-1 toll-free, 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

If you are having a health emergency dial 9-1-1 or a local emergency contact number immediately.

If you are searching for additional supports or information not provided here, please email HEM@fnha.ca.
# 10 Steps to FireSmart Your Home

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Move firewood 10-30 meters from your home</td>
<td>Take an inventory of the trees that grow on your property. Trees such as pine are more flammable. Birch and aspen are more fire-resistant</td>
<td>Keep grass cut to less than 10 cm high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Firewood" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Tree" /></td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Lawnmower" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean your roof and gutters of leaves &amp; pine needles</td>
<td>Make sure everyone in your family knows where the gas, electric, and water mains shut-off are!</td>
<td>Trim and prune any trees or vegetation that overhang your roof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Roof" /></td>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Gas Valve" /></td>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Bush" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a wildfire evacuation plan with your household</td>
<td>Are your roof and chimney clean? Do you have a spark arrester? Having a clean, protected roof improves the chances of an entire structure surviving.</td>
<td>Relocate propane tanks 10-30 meters from your home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image7.png" alt="File" /></td>
<td><img src="image8.png" alt="Roof and Chimney" /></td>
<td><img src="image9.png" alt="Propane Tank" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visit FireSmartBC.ca for the FireSmart Homeowner's Manual or firesmartcanada.ca for a guide to fire-resistant plants and landscaping.
How to Build an Emergency Kit and Grab-and-Go Bag

Following a disaster, you may need to stay at home with your emergency kit or leave immediately with your grab-and-go bags. Gather and organize your emergency supplies now so you’re ready when disaster strikes.

Building your emergency kit or grab-and-go bag doesn’t need to be expensive or take a lot of time. Follow our basic supply lists below. Just remember to consider the unique needs of your household, such as including items for pets or seniors.

Emergency Kit Supplies

Put your supplies in one or two containers, such as plastic bins or duffel bags. Store them in an area of your home that’s easy to get to, such as a hall closet, spare room or garage.

• Non-perishable food: three-day to one-week supply, with a manual can opener
• Water: four litres per person, per day for drinking and sanitation
• Phone charger, battery bank or inverter
• Battery-powered or hand-crank radio
• Battery-powered or hand-crank flashlight
• Extra batteries
• First-aid kit and medications
• Personal toiletries and items, such as an extra pair of glasses or contact lenses
• Copy of your emergency plan, copies of important documents, such as insurance papers
• Cash in small bills
• Garbage bags and moist towelettes for personal sanitation
• Seasonal clothing, sturdy footwear and emergency blanket
• Dust masks if you live in an area that’s prone to earthquakes
• Whistle
• Help/OK Sign: Display the appropriate side outward in your window during a disaster.
**Build a Grab-and-Go Bag**

You may need to leave immediately in the event of an emergency. Be ready to go by having a smaller version of your emergency kit in an easy-to-access place in your home. In addition to having one at home, create grab-and-go bags for your workplace and vehicles that contain:

- Food (ready to eat) and water
- Phone charger and battery bank
- Small battery-powered or hand-crank radio
- Battery-powered or hand-crank flashlight
- Extra batteries
- Small first-aid kit and personal medications
- Personal toiletries and items, such as an extra pair of glasses or contact lenses
- Copy of your emergency plan, copies of important documents, such as insurance papers
- Cash in small bills
- Local map with your family meeting place identified
- Seasonal clothing and an emergency blanket
- Pen and notepad
- Whistle
FAQ: How to Pack Water in Your Emergency Kit

Source: PreparedBC www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/preparedbc

How much water do I need?
The general rule is to pack four litres of water per person per day.

- Children, people who are nursing and people who are sick may need more.
- Hot temperatures can double water needs.
- Pets need about 30 millilitres of water per kilogram of body weight per day. An average-sized cat or small-sized dog needs at least 1/5 of a litre, or half a cup, daily.

How and where do I store my water?

- It’s recommended you purchase commercially-bottled water and keep it in its original container in an easily accessible, cool and dark place.
- Make sure you don’t open the water until you need it.
- Observe the expiration or “best before” dates.
- Set a reminder in your phone or remember to check the dates when the clocks “spring forward” and “fall back”.

Can I purify my own water?

- It is recommended to buy commercially-bottled water.
- Knowing how to purify water can help you if your regular water supply becomes contaminated or if you are in a place where clean water is not available.
- There are steps you can take to purify your drinking water: https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/tf6354

What hidden water sources are available in my home?

- There are hidden water sources in your home that can be made safe to drink.
- Ice cubes in a freezer can be melted down into potable water.
- There may be water in your hot-water tank and water pipes; but, you should purify it before using it for drinking, food preparation, or hygiene.
- Do not use water from toilet tanks or bowls, radiators, waterbeds, pools or spas.

What about water filtration devices?

- These take up less room and there are a lot of available options. Different brands offer many filter types and sizes, ranging from water bottle-sized to 18-litre containers or larger.
- If you choose filtration, it's still a good idea to store some bottled water as well.
What to Do if You Are Evacuated

Local First Nations governments are responsible for planning for and responding to emergency events. The FNHA supports governments to coordinate emergency health services and relief for community members and works with non-Indigenous governments to ensure that evacuees have access to culturally-safe care and mental wellness supports.

**Know Your Evacuation Stages**

Be prepared. Understand the evacuation stages used in British Columbia, and what to do for each. This will help you respond quickly and confidently.

- **Evacuation Alert:** Be ready to leave on short notice.
- **Evacuation Order:** You are at risk. Leave IMMEDIATELY.
- **Evacuation Rescind:** All is now safe and you can return home.

*Above image is from the Government of BC Wildfire Preparedness Guide.*

**What to do when you receive an Evacuation Order**

During an Evacuation Order, evacuees should do the following:

1. Follow instructions on where to go provided by your First Nation or local authority
2. If you can, help Elders and neighbours who have limited mobility to evacuate
3. Visit Emergency Info BC or follow @EmergencyInfoBC for news and updates
4. Wait for the evacuation to be rescinded before returning home

**If you have tested positive for COVID-19**

- Connect with your case manager for the latest health system information
- If possible:
  - Evacuate by your own vehicle. If you do not have a personal vehicle, ask your case manager for instructions
  - Maintain physical distancing while travelling
  - Go to designated accommodations immediately using the most direct, safe route
Where to go if you receive an Evacuation Order

Only travel to Emergency Support Services (ESS) locations designated by your local or First Nation's government. Supports will not be available if you travel to a non-designated location.

Evacuees should first look to use their own resources, such as insurance or staying with friends or family members, to support themselves. If you don't have your own resources the ESS program may be able to support you.

1. Go to your nearest evacuation reception centre
The reception centre will be listed on your evacuation order. First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) team members are available at many centres to help community members to access culturally-safe supports.

For an up-to-date list of evacuation alerts and orders, or information on how to find a reception centre, call the provincial Emergency Support Services line at 1-800-585-9559 or go to emergencyinfobc.gov.bc.ca/wildfires-2021. The line is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

2. Register for Emergency Support Services
People who are on evacuation alert or ordered to evacuate can register to receive Emergency Support Services from the Province of BC. If your local emergency program asks you to self-register, you can do it easily using the Evacuation Registration Assistance tool at ess.gov.bc.ca. It’s important to register even if you don’t need accommodation.

Supports Available

Evacuees are encouraged to follow the direction of your local or First Nations' government. Each jurisdiction will be different, however some can perform the following support services:

• Evacuee registration
• Needs assessments
• Providing information
• Referrals for supports (i.e., food, accommodation, harm reduction, transportation, incidentals and clothing)

Group Lodging

Depending on the size of the evacuation, local and First Nations governments may seek to use economical and efficient methods for lodging evacuees. This may include working with hotels or alternative lodging operations.
Disasters like wildfires affect individuals in many ways and may affect your emotional, spiritual, physical and mental well-being. The emotional effects may show up immediately or appear weeks to months later.

If you are feeling stressed or anxious this time of year, you are not alone. The fear of having to flee your home, and possibly leave animals and possessions behind can cause distress, fear and anxiety for you and your loved ones. Even the prospect of living with smoky skies during wildfire season can cause distress.

The risks of wildfire season can also trigger stressful thoughts and feelings related to loss of connection to land, home, and traditional foods and medicines. For some First Nations people it can trigger trauma associated with memories of being forcibly removed from home and sent to residential school, Indian hospitals or foster homes. We would like to offer some support.

Recognizing Anxiety and Trauma

Anxiety and trauma related to disasters affect people in different ways. Physical and emotional signs may include:

- Overwhelming feelings of fear, stress and emotional distress – a feeling of being unable to cope
- Acute anxiety, excessive worry and panic attacks
- Feeling down or depressed, angry, sad, confused, low mood
- Trouble breathing
- Trouble eating (including overeating or not eating enough)
- Trouble sleeping (including nightmares, oversleeping or not sleeping enough)
- Irritability and agitation, feeling jumpy, tense or hypervigilant
- Avoidance or withdrawal – feeling or being unable to meet the demands of what needs to be done (e.g., preparing for evacuation)
Four Tips to Stay Well

It is important to understand that there is a natural grieving process following any loss and a disaster of any size can cause unusual or unwanted stress.

Below are four tips to help you stay mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually well during wildfire season:

1. **Prepare yourself, your family and loved ones**
   Having a clear emergency or safety plan and kit ready for your family and pets can ease your mind and allow you to focus on other needs. Even if your community has an emergency plan, it is still important to make a plan that addresses the specific needs of your family and household.

2. **Take care of the basics**
   Stress takes a toll on our physical and mental health. Try to eat well and get enough sleep. Be kind to yourself. Give and accept support. Follow your daily routine if possible. Take a break from disaster news coverage and from thinking and talking about disaster events.

3. **Ask for help**
   Whether it’s with family, friends, an Elder, cultural supports, doctor, nurse or counsellor—talking helps.
   Crisis lines are available to listen and help anytime—not just during a crisis*. Those with moderate to severe symptoms that last more than two to four weeks should consult a family physician, if available. Otherwise, reach out to your nearest Mental Health and Substance Use Centre or community nurse.

4. **Help others**
   Check in on Elders and children. Coping may be more difficult for Elders living alone and those who have mental health and wellness concerns, or those with few social supports. Reaching out to connect with them can be a big help.

Other simple actions that you may find helpful are to keep a journal, stay active (and exercise indoors if the air quality is poor), do volunteer work or participate in activities you enjoy (e.g., beading or sewing, singing and drumming).

*IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING RIGHT NOW, confidential, culturally safe support is available 24/7 through the KUU-US Indigenous Crisis Line at: 1-800-558-8717

More support resources can be found at:
www.fnha.ca/wildfires
Gov.bc.ca/NaturalDisasterHealth.ca

Visit PreparedBC for resources to help you understand the hazards in your location and to create a family emergency plan:
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/preparedbc

Visit BC Centre for Disease Control for information on wildfire smoke and steps you can take to protect your health, both indoors and outdoors:
http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/prevention-public-health/wildfire-smoke
Disasters like wildfires affect individuals in many ways. The emotional effects may show up immediately or appear weeks to months later. Here are some helpful tips for recognizing and responding to trauma in children brought on by disaster situations:

Short to mid-term behaviours you may see in your children who are experiencing trauma could include:

- A return to earlier behaviour, (thumb sucking or bed wetting)
- Clinging to parents, crying and screaming
- Reluctance to go to bed
- Nightmares
- Fantasies that the disaster never happened
- Refusal to attend school
- Problems at school
- Inability to concentrate
- Withdrawal, immobility

It is important to understand that there is a natural grieving process following any loss and a disaster of any size can cause unusual or unwanted stress. If you are seeing any of these behaviours there are things you can do to support.

Below are five tips to keep in mind as communities continue to face the wildfires.

- **Talk** to your children about their feelings and your feelings. You will find that many feelings are shared, regardless of age.
- **Encourage** your children to draw pictures of the disaster. This will help you understand how they view what happened.
- **Talk** with your children about what happened, providing factual information that they can understand. Talk about your family’s preparedness, including the role your children can take.
- **Reassure** your children that you and they are safe. Repeat this assurance as often as necessary.
- **Hold** your children. Touch provides extra reassurance that someone is there for them. Spend extra time with them, especially at bedtime. Sing songs or say prayers with them and maintain the spirit of regular family or cultural practices.
Harm Reduction and Overdose Prevention

The FNHA provides a list of culturally-safe resources, services and supports at harmreduction.fnha.ca.

The stress, fear and loss that can come with wildfire season can be especially hard on individuals and families struggling with substance use and addiction. Evacuation may increase risk of withdrawal symptoms for individuals who depend on alcohol and substances, and who may not have access to a safe supply.

Overdose Prevention Sites

Dozens of overdose prevention sites (OPS) and supervised consumption sites (SCS) operate across BC. These sites provide a hygienic environment where people can consume drugs under the supervision of healthcare workers or peers without fear of being arrested.

OPS and SCS sites reduce drug-related harms such as overdose, infection and death. Over 120 of these sites operate around the world without a single fatal overdose recorded.

OPS and SCS sites provide: harm reduction supplies (such as sterile rigs/syringes, stems/pipes, water, ties, swabs); a comfortable place to consume drugs; nurses or trained individuals and naloxone in case of an overdose; a “chill-out” space; education about safe injection techniques, and referrals to different health and social services.

Harm reduction service locations by Region:

Fraser Salish  https://www.fraserhealth.ca/Service-Directory/Services/mental-health-and-substance-use/substance-use/overdose-prevention-site#.YOKm-ExICUm

Interior  
https://www.interiorhealth.ca/AboutUs/Leadership/MHO/PHEmergency/Pages/default.aspx

Northern  

Vancouver Island  https://www.islandhealth.ca/our-locations/overdose-prevention-supervised-consumption-locations

First Nations Health Information for Wildfire Evacuees

Important information about health and social services for First Nations communities impacted by wildfire in BC.

**HEALTH BENEFITS**

**Call Health Benefits at 1-855-550-5454**

**Refilling Prescriptions**
With the current evacuations taking place in BC, some FNHA clients may not have access to their medications and will require a refill or replacement. To replace or refill a prescription for medication, please go to a local pharmacy. The pharmacist will be able to provide support. FNHA clients can call Health Benefits if they need help with this process.

**Medical Transportation**
For support to attend a medically-necessary appointment such as dialysis, please contact Health Benefits for guidance on what supports are available.

**Medical Supplies and Equipment (Including Oxygen Tanks)**
Health Benefits can help with questions about medical supplies and equipment, including refill or replacement of oxygen tanks and related products.

**Eyewear and Vision Care**
Health Benefits covers certain vision care items and services such as prescription eyewear and repairs, sight tests and eye exams. Many vision care providers can bill FNHA Health Benefits directly, so clients do not pay out of pocket.

**Dental Items (Dentures)**
Contact Health Benefits for support to access dental services or find out what is covered. Most dental providers in BC can bill the FNHA directly.

**MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS**

Available 24-hours a day, seven days a week, regardless of where individuals reside in the province, those in need of support can call for an immediate response.

**Indian Residential School Survivors Society**
1-800-721-0066

**Tsow-Tun-Le-Lum**
1-888-403-3123

**FNHA Virtual Doctor of the Day**
Doctors are on call seven days a week to provide medical advice, prescriptions and referrals. Visit [www.fnha.ca/virtualdoctor](http://www.fnha.ca/virtualdoctor)

**FNHA Virtual Substance Use & Psychiatry Services**
Specialists in addictions medicine and psychiatry are on call weekdays to support individuals and their family members. Visit [www.fnha.ca/virtualhealth](http://www.fnha.ca/virtualhealth)

**FNHA Mental Health Counselling**
Please contact FNHA Health Benefits at 1-855-550-5454 to be connected with a mental health counsellor.

**STAY UP TO DATE**

The FNHA wildfire information page ([www.fnha.ca/wildfire](http://www.fnha.ca/wildfire)) will be the main location for FNHA updates on the wildfire situation, current evacuation zones, road closures, emergency phone lines and other crucial emergency services. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and provide updates as needed.
# Need to See a Doctor?

Call the First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day service at 1.855.344.3800

## With a computer, phone or tablet connected to wi-fi

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<td>![Zoom Icon]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Call 1.855.344.3800 to talk to a Medical Office Assistant and book your appointment. You will receive an email to confirm your appointment. | **Computer or Laptop**  
When it is time for your appointment, click on the Zoom video conference link in the email to launch the Zoom app. |
| ![Zoom Icon]                                                          | ![Zoom Icon]                                                          |
| **Smart Phone or Tablet**  
Download the Zoom app from the App Store or Play Store. When it is time for your appointment, click on the Zoom video conference link in the email to launch the Zoom app. |  |

### Helpful Zoom tips

- ![Microphone Icon]  
  If the doctor can’t hear you, unmute your microphone in the Zoom app.
- ![Headphones Icon]  
  Use a headset or earpods to remove echoes and protect your privacy.

## Over the telephone (no wi-fi connection)

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</table>

Hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., 7 days per week.
Emergency Preparedness for Pet Owners

The following information is published on the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) website at spca.bc.ca

Register your pet: In the event you’re separated from your pet during an emergency evacuation, making sure your pet is registered with identification (microchip, tattoo or licence) is crucial for a quick and safe return.

During an emergency, your pet may have entered a shelter and its microchip can be easily scanned (or tattoo code read). The ID is then searched on bcpetregistry.ca and owner is contacted using the phone number or email on your pet's profile. *It's important that your contact details are updated if they ever change – this can be done online.

Emergency Checklist

- **Food, water and treats** for one week:
  - Include dishes – collapsible are great
  - Manual can opener, spoon/scoop
  - Water: Cats – 1 litre/day; Dogs – 4 litres/day
- **Medications and medical records:** include vet contact info, pet photos with written descriptions of your pets, and store in a Ziploc bag.
  - Copy of your pet's current vaccination history
  - Any special medications and instructions
- **Dogs:** waste bags; disinfectant for pet mess clean-up, paper towels
- **Small cat:** litter box, litter, scoop, garbage bags
- **Small animals:** bedding, extra water bottle, hiding box, extra hay
- **Dog leashes** (6 foot and 15-20 foot), harness, muzzles; consider having a cat harness and leash
- **Places to hide:** Having spaces for your cat or dog to hide in will provide some much-needed comfort. While humans understand what's going on and know it's temporary, going into a big gym or a shelter is scary for pets. Having somewhere they can play or hide gives them a chance to feel safe wherever they are.
- **Toys to help entertain** and lower stress (dogs: Kong, ball, treat ball; cats: feather wand, catnip toys)
- **Comfort:** Bring some of the things that will allow them to feel comfortable.
- **Label all containers** with pet names and your contact information – things can go missing in an emergency. As many items as possible should be packed in ready-to-go bins or backpacks. Mark storage bins with pet names and your contact information in case items are separated at an evacuation center.
- **If you have animals who cannot be moved** in an immediate evacuation, such as aquarium fish or farm animals, create a sign describing the animals left on the property with your name and contact information. Prepare this now and keep tape with it so it is ready to stick to your door to alert rescue officials.

**Animal Assistance Programs at Evacuation Reception Centres**

*The following information is from the Canadian Disaster Animal Response Team (CDART)*

Experienced animal-care volunteers work with evacuation reception centres to receive pets and move them to a safe place where they will be cared for until you're able to return home.

**Make the evacuation reception centre your first point of contact and ask them to put you in touch with an animal assistance organization.**

For questions or support for moving non-commercial livestock or farm animals, visit the CDART community Facebook pages at:

- CDART Southwest BC
  https://www.facebook.com/CDART-Southwest-BC-241411735956025/

- CDART Central BC
  https://www.facebook.com/groups/231831843998760/

Website
https://www.cdart.org
Wildfire Smoke Information and Resources for Communities
How to Prepare for the Wildfire Smoke Season

Wildfires and smoke are a normal part of summer in British Columbia, but our seasons seem to be getting longer and more extreme. We cannot predict when big wildfires will occur, so it is best to prepare for a smoky summer before the season starts.

Reducing exposure to wildfire smoke is the best way to protect your health.

- Most people spend up to 90% of their time indoors, so clean indoor air is important.
- Purchase a portable air cleaner that uses HEPA filtration to remove smoke from the indoor air. Do your research to find something suitable for your needs.
- If you have forced air heating, talk to your service provider about what filters and settings to use during smoky conditions.
- Know where to find cleaner air in your community. Libraries, community centres, and shopping malls often have cooler, filtered air.

Be aware of people who should take extra care.

Some people may be more sensitive to smoke, including those with chronic conditions such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes, as well as pregnant women, infants, young children, older adults, and marginalized people.

- If you or members of your family have a chronic disease, work with your doctor to create a management plan for smoky periods.
- If you use rescue medications, make sure you have a supply at home and always carry them with you during wildfire season. Have a clear plan to follow if your rescue medications cannot bring your condition under control.
- If you are pregnant or caring for an infant through the summer months, make a plan for minimizing smoke exposures.

THOSE MOST AFFECTED

- People with chronic lung/heart disease
- Pregnant women
- Infants, young children
- Older adults

FOR MORE INFORMATION bccdc.ca/wildfiresmoke
For people who spend time outdoors, there are still ways to reduce smoke exposure and its health impacts.

- If you have an outdoor occupation, review resources from WorkSafe BC. [https://u.nu/4vI8](https://u.nu/4vI8)
- If you care for groups of children or plan outdoor events, ensure that your organization has a smoke contingency plan.
- The harder you breathe, the more smoke you inhale. Take it easy to reduce smoke exposure. [https://u.nu/u3j5d](https://u.nu/u3j5d)

Outside the Lower Mainland, sign up for the [Air Quality Subscription Service](https://u.nu/e3xtf) to get text or email alerts.

- Within the Lower Mainland, sign up for the [Metro Vancouver Subscription Service](https://u.nu/7gwqj) to get email alerts.
- The current [Air Quality and Health Index](https://u.nu/p-39) (AQHI) map provides health-specific messaging.
- Install the [AQHI Canada app](https://u.nu/lamf) on your Android or iOS device to monitor your areas, and to get notifications when air quality changes.
- If you live somewhere without an AQHI reading, check the current map of fine particulate matter concentrations or [PM2.5](https://u.nu/6ce1).
- The [FireWork Forecast](https://u.nu/rmzk) shows maps of predicted smoke impacts over the next 72 hours.
- The provincial map of [Active Wildfires](https://u.nu/zsrj) keeps track of the current situation.
- Extreme wildfires often occur when it is very hot outside, which can also affect your health. Install the [WeatherCAN](https://u.nu/an9l) app to get notifications about smoke, extreme temperatures and other important weather events.

There are many tools available to help you understand the air quality impacts of smoke. Reliable sources of information can help you stay protected.
Individuals are asked to please contact their community health centre to request support for air purifiers. Requests will then be forwarded to the FNHA.

The FNHA has a limited number of air purifiers available for communities to provide to individuals who are most vulnerable to smoke from wildfires.

Public health evidence tells us that certain people are at more risk from wildfire smoke. These include the elderly, babies and young children, and people who are pregnant or have chronic health conditions.

Due to wildfire smoke in various areas of the province, the FNHA will consider requests for air purifiers from communities to support individuals who:

- have asthma
- have heart disease or diabetes
- are pregnant
- live with babies or young children
- are elderly

**DUE TO A LIMITED NUMBER OF AIR PURIFIERS / CLEANERS** priority will be given to individuals who:

- live in a remote community / housing with limited access to community clean air shelters
- live in a home without a ventilation system that can recirculate air
- have limited transportation / mobility and are unable to access a community clean air shelter
- have respiratory symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or a positive COVID-19 test, or are a close contact of someone with a positive test

**Community Clean Air Shelters** By now, your local FNHA Environmental Health Officer (EHO) has likely been in contact with your community about an appropriate location for a clean air shelter, including considerations for physical distancing and preventing the community spread of COVID-19. If you need more information please reach out to your local EHO.

**Replacement HEPA Filters** If you received or purchased HEPA filters during past wildfire seasons, ensure that they are still in good condition and replace the filters if needed. Replacement filters are not provided by the FNHA.

**Supporting Resources** For more information on how air purifiers work, and how to protect yourself and your loved ones from wildfire smoke, visit the BC Centre for Disease Control at bccdc.ca/wildfiresmoke. For more info on wildfire smoke and other supports available to individuals and communities, please visit www.fnha.ca/wildfire.
Home-Made Box Fan Air Filters

One of the best ways to protect your health from wildfire smoke is to create and stay in a cleaner air space at home. Commerically available portable air cleaners with HEPA filters are ideal for removing small particles from the air, but they may not be easily accessible. A home-made box fan air filter can also help to reduce indoor concentrations of wildfire smoke in a small room.

If you choose to make and use a home-made box fan air filter, there are limitations and potential risks that should be acknowledged.

- There is very limited peer-reviewed evidence on the effectiveness or safety of home-made box fan air filters.
- There is no clear guidance on when it is necessary to change filters on home-made units.
- Box fans are not designed to operate with a filter. The filter will create a pressure drop and increase the burden on the fan motor, potentially causing overheating, shortening the lifetime of the motor and creating a fire hazard.

**FIGURE 1:** Different types of air cleaners, including a commercially available portable air cleaner unit (LEFT, best), a double box fan filter (MIDDLE, better), and a single box fan filter (RIGHT, good)

If you choose to make and use a box fan filter:

- Use a box fan with a safety fuse and multiple speed options. Look for marks from recognized certifying organization such as the Underwriters Laboratories (UL), Canadian Standards Association (CSA) and Intertek ETL program.

- Use a high efficiency filter, preferably MERV 13 (FPR 10 or MPR1500-1900) or higher.

- Consider making a double (triangle) box fan filter, which creates less pressure drop by increasing the filter surface area (Figure 1, MIDDLE)

- **DO NOT** leave the fan running unattended

- **DO NOT** use the fan on high speed

- **DO NOT** block the back or the front of the fan – keep it away from walls, curtains, furniture, etc.
SCIENCE IN ACTION

- There is very little scientific evidence on the effectiveness of box fan air filters, so more information was needed before recommending them in British Columbia.
- The BCCDC partnered with UBC to test box fan air filters in a special air pollution booth (Figure 2).
- Different filters and fan speeds were tested with different concentrations of fine particulate matter (PM$_{2.5}$).
- A tiny thermometer was used to measure the motor temperature with and without a filter attached.
- The study found that high quality filters at medium speed worked best (Figure 3) and that a single filter increased the motor temperature by about 2°C.

BOX FAN FILTERS WORK BETTER WHEN:

- Used in a small room (e.g. a single bedroom) that is kept at a comfortable temperature.
- Turned on for at least 15 minutes at medium speed.
- Run at moderate speed – higher speeds can blow smoke around a small room (Figure 3).
- Doors and windows to the room are closed.

FIGURE 2: The BC Centre for Disease Control partnered with UBC to test box fan filters in an air pollution booth (left) and a tiny thermometer was used to measure the motor temperature (right).

FIGURE 3: When the BC Centre for Disease Control ran trials of box fan filters at different speeds, it found that concentrations of fine particulate matter (PM$_{2.5}$) were most reduced at medium speed. The single filter used in this trial had a microparticle performance rating (MPR) of 1500.
SUPPLIES YOU NEED

- 20” x 20” box fan
- One or two 20” x 20” x 1” high efficiency furnace filters, preferably MERV 13 (FRP 10 or MPR 1500-1900) or higher
- Tape
- Marker
- Cardboard and scissors (for a double box fan filter)

Plug in the fan and turn it on to test the direction of air flow, and use the marker to draw an arrow from the back (where air goes in) to the front (where air comes out) on top of the fan.

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For a double box fan filter:

- Cut two triangles out of cardboard with each side measuring 21” and each angle measuring 60 degrees
- Tape the two filters together along one side, make sure the arrows on the edges of the two filters point to the same direction
- Tape the tops of the two filters to one triangle, and the bottoms to the other triangle. Make sure the arrows on the edges of the filters point to the inside of the triangle, where the fan will go.
- Lightly tape both filters and triangles to the back of the box fan – using a lot of tape will put more strain on the fan motor.

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For a single box fan filter:

- Align the filter against the back of the fan
- Turn the filter so that the arrows marked on the edges of the filter face the same direction as the arrow drawn on the fan
- Lightly tape the filter onto the fan – using a lot of tape will put more strain on the fan motor.
Face Masks for Wildfire Smoke

The best way to protect your health from wildfire smoke is to seek cleaner air. Use a portable air cleaner at home, find an indoor environment with filtered air, or relocate to an area with less smoke. If you cannot access cleaner air, some face masks can provide protection from wildfire smoke. However, it is important to be aware of the limitations and potential risks.

Well-fitted respirators offer the most effective protection from fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}).

- Respirators are marked with letter and number combinations, such as N95, KN95, and KF94. These products are very similar, but the markings indicate different standards used to test them.
- A good fit is the most important thing for filtration of PM_{2.5}. Inhaled air must pass through the material of the mask, not around it.
- A well-fitted respirator will reduce PM_{2.5} concentrations by more than 90%.
- It can be difficult to get a good fit if the respirator is the wrong size or shape for your face, especially if you have a small face or facial hair.
- A 3-layer cloth or disposable mask provides moderate protection compared with a respirator.
- The effectiveness of 3-layer masks can be improved by following the same advice used for COVID-19 protection [https://u.nu/dwmi4](https://u.nu/dwmi4).
- Simple 1-layer cloth masks, bandanas, gaiters, scarves, or t-shirts offer no protection, whether wet or dry.

If you chose to wear a respirator or mask for wildfire smoke, you should be aware of the limitations and potential risks.

- It is NOT SAFE to wear any mask while sleeping.
- Most respirators and masks cannot protect against the gases in wildfire smoke, which may also cause irritation.
- Wearing a respirator or snugly-fitted mask may make breathing more difficult. Pregnant women and people with respiratory and cardiovascular conditions should talk to their health care providers before using masks for wildfire smoke.
- Respirators and snugly-fitted masks are uncomfortable to wear, especially when it is hot.
- Respirators and masks do not work against wildfire smoke when saturated with sweat or water.
- People with limited upper body mobility may need help putting respirators or masks on and taking them off.
- The fit of a respirator can be affected by physical activities such as bending or lifting, and should be re-checked often (see next page).
- Wearing a mask may lead to a false sense of security – listen to your body at all times and stop or reduce activities if you feel unwell.
Respirators come in a wide range of shapes and sizes.

- If you are exposed to wildfire smoke while working, speak with your employer about respiratory protection.
- There are many new respirators available since the COVID-19 pandemic, and it can be difficult to spot counterfeit products.
- The US CDC has been testing different products and publishing the filtration efficiency results https://nu.zh25z.
- All respirators have two straps – some go around the head and some hook behind the ears.
- Test different respirators BEFORE the wildfire season begins. Once you find a model that fits well, buy a few replacements.

Steps for wearing a respirator properly:

Choose the right shape and size for your face. Many models come in multiple sizes, ranging from XS to XL.

If you are wearing glasses or a hat, take them off while you fit the respirator.

1. Put the respirator on and arrange the straps or ear loops. If the respirator has two straps, the top one should sit above your ears and the lower one should sit below your ears, as shown.

2. Mold the nose piece (usually a metal strip) around the bridge of your nose with both hands to create a snug fit.

3. Test the respirator for leaks by covering it with both hands. When you inhale, the material should pull in towards your face. When you exhale, you should not feel air escaping from around the edges. If air leaks in or out around the nose, re-mold the nosepiece. If air leaks in or out around the cheeks or chin, adjust the placement of the straps on your head or tighten the ear loops.

If you cannot get a good fit, consider asking someone for help or finding a different respirator that is better fitted to your face.

Store your respirator in a clean, sealed container with hard sides to make sure it does not get dirty, wet or bent out of shape.

Most respirators are disposable, but you can re-wear each one for wildfire smoke as long as it stays clean, dry, and well-fitted. Test the fit of your respirator each time you put it on.
Wildfire smoke can have additional health risks for vulnerable populations or create irritating symptoms in healthy individuals. Staying indoors is recommended during smoke events to reduce exposure. Creating a clean air shelter can help. If your area is regularly impacted by smoke, plan your clean air shelters before the smoke season so that you are prepared.

Clean air shelters are areas, rooms or buildings that have a filtration system that reduces the amount of particulates generated by wildfire smoke. The objective, as in the image below, is to limit outdoor air entering the home, avoid creating indoor air pollutants, and filtering indoor air.

There are no specific standards or air quality measurements for clean air shelters. A review of science-based literature has shown that central air units are effective at reducing particulate materials/matter.

**CLEAN AIR SHELTERS**

- Limit infiltration from outdoors
- Limit indoor air pollution
- Clean indoor air (existing central air, HEPA, electrostatic precipitator)
A HOME CLEAN AIR SHELTER provides your home, or a room in your home, with filtration to reduce smoke exposure.

- Close all windows and doors.
- Seal cracks around doors and windows.
- Turn off exhaust fans, window air conditioners or other external vents.
- A central air system or air conditioning system can be used.
- Turn the fresh-air intake off and set to recirculate.
- A high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter is best; however conventional filters will lower particulate matter levels to a lesser degree.
- Portable air cleaners (HEPA or electrostatic air filters) can be very effective at reducing smoke particles. Be sure that the unit is appropriately sized for the room.
- Avoid creating other air pollution (e.g., smoking, burning candles, gas and wood stoves, and certain cleaning products). Avoid vacuuming which can stir up dust.
- During heat events, air conditioning may be needed to keep the home cool and reduce heat stress.
- During periods when smoke clears, open windows and doors to provide fresh air into the home.

If you do not have a central air system or access to a portable air cleaner, taking the steps above to limit smoke entering the home will still help to reduce smoke levels in the home. Ground floor or basement levels tend to be cooler and may be less impacted by smoke.

Portable air cleaners should meet these standards:
- Designated as HEPA or electrostatic precipitator
- CADR rated for tobacco smoke
- Sized for the room it will be used in

A COMMUNITY CLEAN AIR SHELTER is a building, or area of a building, with filtration to help reduce smoke exposure. It can provide temporary relief for community members during smoke events.

- Buildings such as band halls or schools, shopping malls, libraries or community centres usually have appropriate cooling and air filtration equipment.
- Conventional filters provide some reduction in particulate levels.
- Consider installing HEPA filters in long-term care or Elders facilities, child care centres and schools to reduce exposure for these more vulnerable populations.
- Confirm with a professional if the building system is suitable for a HEPA filter.
- Any modifications to building HVAC systems should be done by a professional.
- Consider giving vulnerable populations priority access to these areas.

FNHA Environmental Health Officers can work with communities to identify suitable community clean air shelters and provide advice on home clean air shelters.

At this time, FNHA does not provide funding for the purchase of portable air cleaners. Communities are encouraged to prioritize purchases for vulnerable populations. Consult with emergency response programs to confirm eligible purchases.
Additional Resources and Contacts

EmergencyInfoBC is active during partial and full-scale provincial emergencies.
- Follow on Twitter at @EmergencyInfoBC for official response and recovery sources, as well as verified information from trusted partners

Interior Health Current Major Events
- https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/Emergency/MajorEvents/Pages/default.aspx

Northern Health Wildfire Information
- https://www.northernhealth.ca/health-topics/wildfires-and-your-health

FNHA Quality Care and Safety Office

All Indigenous people have a right to access a health care system that is free of racism and discrimination, and to feel safe when accessing health and emergency services.

You have the right to give feedback and receive a timely response, without fear of retribution or an impact on the quality of care that you deserve. The FNHA takes complaints seriously. You can also choose to remain anonymous.

FNHA Quality Care and Safety Office
Phone: 1-844-935-1044 (toll free)
Email: quality@fnha.ca
A member of the team will respond within two business days

Quality Care and Safety team members will:
- listen and respond with privacy and respect
- gather information and outline the options available to you
- proceed only according to your wishes
- provide a written response

If possible, please provide the following information:
- name and two ways to contact you if would like a follow up (preferably telephone and email)
- a brief description of your compliment or complaint
- location where it happened
Returning to Your Home After Wildfires
Information From the First Nations Health Authority

Your home may be impacted by smoke, soot and ash, chemicals, structural damage and water damage. This information is a collection of health and safety considerations during initial work to restore your home. This document is intended to be broad-serving and not all of the information may apply to your situation.

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Contact Information
First Nations Health Authority, Environmental Public Health Services
Find your local FNHA Environmental Health Officer at:
http://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/environmental-health

EPHS After-hours line: 1-844-666-0711.

Health Link: Call 811

Content Adapted from: Alberta Health Services and Interior Health
Protect yourself and your family: Re-entering areas burned by wildfire safely

Do not re-enter any areas that were heavily damaged or destroyed by the wildfire until the area has been cleared by the local fire authority. Once you are able to enter burned out areas safely, be very careful. Take basic precautions and be aware of hazards to your health and safety.

What hazards should I watch for?
- Slip, trip and fall hazards from unstable structures, open pits or wet and slippery surfaces.
- Sharp objects such as nails, metal, concrete or wood debris.
- Ash, soot and demolition dust.
- Hazardous materials such as kitchen and bathroom cleaning products, paint, batteries, and pesticide, herbicide and fuel containers which have been partially damaged or destroyed.
- Confined or poorly ventilated areas where carbon monoxide may be present from the operation of pumps, generators, or pressure washers. Be careful entering tight spaces.
- Propane cylinders for heating or from BBQ appliances.

Fire Ash
The ash deposited by forest fires is relatively nontoxic and similar to ash that might be found in your fireplace. However, any ash will contain small amounts of cancer-causing chemicals. Fire ash may be:
- irritating to the skin, especially to those with sensitive skin.
- irritating to the nose and throat and may cause coughing.
- a trigger of asthmatic attacks in people who already have asthma.

What Personal Protective equipment (PPE) should I use to enter burned out areas?
Personal Protective Equipment helps to reduce exposure to hazards. Use personal protective equipment when entering your home. In particular, people with asthma or respiratory conditions should only spend short periods of time in these areas and wear respiratory protection.

Breathing protection:
- Use N95 rated masks to help filter out and reduce exposure to fine dust particles such as ash, soot, and other nuisance-type particles. A mask rated N95, when properly fitted (see section below) will be more effective than a dust mask in blocking particles from ash.
- Look for “NIOSH 95” on the package. N95 means the mask blocks about 95 percent of particles that are 0.3 microns in size or larger.
- Purchase N95 masks at hardware, safety/construction supply businesses and home improvement centres.
- Masks can add physical stress to a person by making it harder to breathe. Individuals who have any doubts concerning their ability to wear a mask should consult with their physician.
- If you cannot locate N95 masks, a well-fitting dust or surgical mask may provide some protection during cleanup. Many ash particles are larger than found in smoke, and a dust mask can significantly reduce the amount of particles inhaled.
How to Self-Fit N95 Masks

- Always read and follow the manufacturer’s directions when using a mask.
- The mask must cover both the nose and mouth to keep you from breathing in dust and ash.
- If the mask does not have a snug fit, it will not work properly. Correct fit of the respirator requires contact with smooth skin. Masks will not work properly for people with beards or facial hair.
- Always use both straps on the respirator to hold it in place to keep air from leaking around the respirator.
- Do a user seal check, including both positive and negative pressure checks, to confirm that the respirator is adjusted and fits properly.
  - Negative pressure check – Place both hands completely over the respirator and inhale sharply. Be careful not to disturb the position of the respirator. The respirator should pull into your face. If air leaks around your face or eyes, adjust the nosepiece and straps and repeat the positive pressure check.
  - Positive pressure check – Put your hands over the respirator and breathe out sharply. If your respirator has an exhalation valve be sure to cover the exhalation valve when you exhale. No air should leak out of the respirator if the respirator fits properly. If air leaks out, re-adjust the nosepiece and straps and repeat the negative pressure check.

Protective clothing, gloves and boots:

- Select “head-to-toe” protection based upon the situation and work to be done. Consider durability, including cut, puncture, abrasion and slip resistance.
- At minimum, wear long sleeve shirts, long pants, or coveralls, leather gloves and boots with thick soles to prevent punctures from sharp objects.

Eye, face and head protection:

- Wear safety glasses or goggles which provide wrap-around protection. Regular sunglasses are not sufficient protection.
- Protective helmets or hard-hats are recommended for clean-up of areas where there is a risk of falling debris due to structural damage to the home.

Hearing protection:

- Ear plugs or safety ear muffs should be used when operating heavy machinery or power tools.
Re-enter your home safely

Return to your home only once your local authorities have said it is safe to do so.

Do Not Enter your home if:

- There is any danger of a structural failure or collapse. Check for any visible structural damage to your home that was caused by fire.
- Roofs and floors may be damaged and subject to collapse.
- The foundation of your home and any brick or cement fireplace chimneys can be severely damaged by heat.
- The concrete foundation of your home may be cracked and leaning or looking like it will actually fall down. It is a very unsafe place for you to be trying to retrieve any items or even to climb down to try to see what damage may have happened.
- Take all appropriate precautions to protect yourself and family.

Use these tips to protect yourself and property once in your home:

- Wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) including masks, gloves and boots.
- Never try to turn utilities back on until they have been checked first by your local utility provider and they have told you it is safe to do so. It is possible that your local government and utility service providers may have had to turn off the supply of natural gas, electricity and drinking water as a result of this fire.
- Do not try to use any electrical appliances or power in your home or garage that may have come in contact with fire, water or fire retardant until they have been checked and cleared for use by a qualified electrician.
- Visually check the stability of the trees around your property. Look for damage on the tree trunk or for visible damage of burned tree roots. Any trees that have been damaged by fire may soon become another hazard. They will need to be cut down and removed.
- Stay away from damaged or fallen power lines and power poles. Wet down any remaining fire debris to minimize health impacts to you and your family from breathing soot and ash particles left by the aftermath of this fire. Do not wash the fire debris into the street.
- Impacted sites will likely smell very smoky for a number of days, and there may be soot and ash, as well as fire debris all around your home and yard.
- If you or any of your family members have breathing difficulties or asthma, take all appropriate precautions to protect yourself. Lingering smoke and fire ash at your home and yard can temporarily worsen your personal respiratory issues.
  - Smoke can irritate the skin, nose, throat, lungs and eyes and can cause coughing and wheezing.
  - These symptoms may be significant depending on the type of soot/ash, amount of exposure, and underlying respiratory conditions.
  - For more information on the health effects from wildfire smoke, please visit http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/prevention-public-health/wildfire-smoke
  - Call Health Link at 811 or consult your family physician for any required medications or extra precautions you may need.
Be careful near fire retardants and fire residues
Two major types of fire retardants have been used in B.C. to fight the recent wildfires. They can appear in both off-white and red colours. The main components include fertilizers, sticking agents, and proprietary (trade secret) compounds. They break down over time.

- Avoid eye contact and wash hands when removing coloured fire suppressants from structures.
- Once no longer visible, these products and residues are harmless.
- Refer to section “Clean up fire retardant and residue” for more details.
- For more information, please see:
  http://www.bccdc.ca/Documents/fire_retardants.pdf

Fire retardants and your pets

- Ensure animals do not ingest water from puddles containing fire retardants or fire residue.
- If your pet appears to be ill from ingesting fire retardants or fire residue, take them to a veterinarian.

Review your insurance information or other options
Insurance options available depend on ownership of the home and insurance coverage. Please contact your band administrator or housing manager if your home is band owned. For individually owned homes:

If you are insured:

- Contact your insurance company/ broker as soon as possible. Try to create an inventory of household items, both inside and outside the buildings, which have been damaged by fire.
- Photograph or videotape the damage as much possible. Do not throw away any damaged goods until after the inventory is made by the insurance assessor.
- Work with your insurance company and their accredited fire restoration companies to try to restore or rebuild your home.

If you are not insured: Check with your local, private service organizations to see what help you may be eligible for:

- Canadian Red Cross
- Salvation Army
- Local religious organizations
- Provincial or municipal emergency social services
- Non-profit crisis centres
- Your municipal emergency coordinator
Drinking Water Quality

Flushing your water system before you use it:
Prior to using your water system for consumption (drinking, cooking or bathing), flush the system to remove all stagnant water from the water lines.

• Run all cold and hot water taps for at least 5 minutes before you use them (even if the water is not hot).

For residents on a community water system:

• Questions about the quality of drinking water should be directed to your public works department. Public works staff is best able to assess how the system has been affected and whether there is any impact on the quality of drinking water. They work closely with the FNHA Environmental Health Officer to verify the safety of drinking water after an emergency.
• If there is a need for a drinking water advisory, this will be communicated to each residence. Please follow the instructions provided to protect your health.
• Where fire retardant was used in a watershed, there will be increased monitoring for changes in water quality.

For residents on individual/private water systems:

• If there is any evidence that the water supply has been affected by fire, an alternative source of drinking water should be used until the water source can be assessed or tested.
• Water system components should be checked for damage. A reputable company and qualified personnel should be used for any repairs.
• Private surface and ground water sources affected by fire retardant application should be tested to ensure compliance with Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines (https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/environmental-workplace-health/reports-publications/water-quality.html)
• Testing can be arranged through your Community Based Drinking Water Monitor or the FNHA Environmental Health Officer for your community.

Regional Drinking Water Information

www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/DrinkingWater
www.northernhealth.ca/services/environmental-health/drinking-water
www.fraserhealth.ca/health-topics-a-to-z/drinking-water#.YOYE2UxICUk
www.islandhealth.ca/learn-about-health/drinking-water
www.vch.ca/public-health/environmental-health-inspections/drinking-water
**Restore your home**

**Discard items impacted by smoke, heat, ash and chemicals**

- Food, medicines, cleaners, cosmetics and other toiletries can be damaged by heat, smoke and lingering chemical residues.
- There will be items that, after inspection of your fire-damaged home, need to be properly disposed of. Before disposing items, make sure that you inventory those items as part of your fire insurance claim.
- Follow local waste disposal requirements for disposal of hazardous materials.

**Foods**

Take stock of the foods in your home. Your fridge and freezer will have been without power for some time now. Take plenty of photos and write down an inventory of the contents of your fridge(s) and freezer(s).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determine how long your power outage lasted:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- A full chest freezer will keep food frozen for up to 2 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A half-chest freezer will keep food frozen for 1 day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A cooler or fridge will keep food cold for 4 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check the food in your home and **discard**:

- Food stored in the refrigerators, coolers and freezers **IF** the temperature was greater than 4°C **at any time**. Please note that the temperature may have exceeded 4°C when the power was disrupted and then returned to 4°C.
- Any food that has spoiled, even if the cooler remained at 4°C at all times.
- Frozen foods that have thawed must be discarded. Once thawed food should not be refrozen.
- Fire or smoke damaged foods like dry goods (i.e. flour, sugar, spices, etc.) even if the package isn't open.
- Unrefrigerated raw vegetables or fruits.
- Foods that were stored in porous containers (e.g. cardboard, foam containers, etc.).
- Canned food where the can is bulging, rusted or dented.
- Jarred foods, including home canned items, as the heat from the fire likely compromised the safety seal.
Be safe. If in Doubt, Throw it out!

Check if your refrigerator or freezer is damaged.

If your refrigerator or freezer is damaged by the fire and is not working, contact the insurance company about coverage as an eligible expense, and your band or local regional district about its safe disposal.

If your refrigerator or freezer was not damaged by the fire and continues to work, take the following steps to clean refrigerators and freezers:

- Remove everything from the refrigerator or freezer.
- Use paper towels or rags to wipe up spills and leaks and dispose of them with the food waste.
- Wash out the appliance with warm, soapy water.
- Disinfect the refrigerator or freezer with a strong bleach solution (1 tsp household bleach per 4 cups water).
- Use latex or rubber gloves if you have sensitive skin that may be irritated by the bleach solution.
- To remove odors, wipe out the appliance with a mixture of water and baking soda, or keep a box of baking soda in the appliance. You also may want to air out the appliance for a few days before plugging it in and using it again. Secure doors in an open position to provide air flow and keep children away.
- Wait until the refrigerator has returned to 4C or freezer has returned to -18C before restocking with food.

Clean up smoke damage and soot

There may be smoke damage and soot in your home after the fire. With the use of Personal Protective Equipment, such as masks, rubber gloves, rubber boots, long sleeved shirts and pants, you can do the following things on your own, if you don't hire a fire restoration company:

Exterior

- Use a hose, sprayer or pressure washer on the exterior of your home, driveways, walkways, vehicles, patios, decks and outdoor furniture. Rinse off air intakes and air conditioners. Be sure NOT to use air hoses or leaf blowers — you do not want to drive more contaminants into your home.
• **Be careful when using pumps, pressure washers or generators in enclosed spaces.**
  Carbon monoxide may be present in confined or poorly ventilated areas where from the operation of pumps, generators, or pressure washers.
• Attic insulation can retain smoke odours, and you may wish to consider replacing it.
• If you have a private septic system, see the section on septic systems below.

**Air Circulation**
• Get the air moving inside your house by using a fan and open your windows, providing there is no smoke or air quality advisory for your neighbourhood**
• Replace your furnace filter and/or air conditioner filter.
• Use a humidifier to reduce how much ash becomes air-borne.
• Have a professional do clean your ducts and air conditioning system.
• Ozone generators do not function as “air cleaners” despite advertising claims.

**NOTE:** when demolition activities are more likely to produce airborne ash:
- Stay indoors,
- Close all external doors and windows, and
- Turn off the ventilation as much as possible for air conditioners and furnaces.

**Interior Surfaces**
• Wash all interior surfaces with mild detergent or appropriate cleaning solution and rinse thoroughly.
• Include the inside of closets, cupboards, drawers and other locations if there is any ash, dust or the odour of fire.
• Vinegar helps remove odour and residue from smoke damage.
• Wet wiping or mopping is safer and more effective than dry or dust mopping. Change the water if it gets dirty and dispose of the solution out of the house.
• Only vacuum with a unit which has a “HEPA” filter which can catch ash particles. Using unfiltered vacuums will just move the ash around the house. Change your HEPA filter frequently.
• Ash left in place is reduced into smaller particles and becomes harder to remove from carpets and surfaces.
• Wash and clean all ash-contaminated household items with mild detergent, changing the water frequently.

**Fabric, carpets and clothing**
• Soot is oily and can stain carpets, curtains and soft furnishing. It must be removed before you try to clean or deodorize those items.
• Steam clean carpets, drapes, curtains and furniture, changing the water frequently.
• Launder or dry clean all affected clothing and other materials. You may have to run numerous rinse cycles to extract all materials. Consider doing this laundering off-site.
using a machine tagged for heavy contaminants at a laundromat. These are usually marked as “oilers.” Washable textiles may benefit from adding one to two cups of vinegar to each wash load.

Electronics
- Take electronic equipment outside and “blow out” the components with an air hose before using. Ash can cause static charges.

Repair water damage
If your home was damaged by water, you will need to get rid of all excess water to prevent mold growth. Before starting any work, ensure proper Personal Protective Equipment is worn, such as a mask and rubber gloves.
- To help prevent mold growth, any water-damaged or water-stained surfaces and appliances should be checked for damage. Clean the affected areas using warm water and soap.
- Dry all wet items as soon as possible.
- Dry wet or waterlogged carpeting as quickly as possible and any underlay should be removed.
- Steam clean carpets with a disinfectant.
- Remove excess moisture from the air inside your home using a dehumidifier.
- Let your insurance company and restoration contractor know as soon as possible if you find any visible mold growth or smell mold inside your home.
- If you discover a small amount of mold (typically under 10 square feet), and you wish to complete the work yourself, more information is available at: https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/air-quality-mould

Clean your yards and outdoor play areas
Your yard and surrounding areas may be impacted by fire ash and soot. These materials will contain polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH,) as well as heavy metals. A fire restoration contractor will be able to provide clean-up services.

If you decide to manage this yourself:
- Use Personal Protective Equipment as appropriate, such as masks, rubber gloves, rubber boots, long sleeved shirt and pants.
- Wet down remaining fire debris. **Do not** wash the fire debris into the street.
- Scrape up fire ash and soot remaining on your property as much as possible, place it in plastic bags or other containers that will prevent it from being disturbed, and take it to a landfill.
  - If your home/property was totally destroyed by fire then the restoration company will look after this for you as they begin the demolition and recovery process.
- If you choose to remediate lawns, you can re-sod or reseed grassy areas.
• Consider adding new, clean soil to gardens if you suspect or know the area was impacted.
• For children’s play areas and equipment, clear away any debris and ensure water that may have been used in the fire is gone.
• If there is fire or structural damage to play equipment, consider blocking access to the area until play equipment is repaired or replaced.
• Use mild detergent and clean water to wash children’s outside toys, play equipment, and recreational equipment.
• Sand, gravel or other loose materials placed beneath playground equipment should be removed and replaced whenever there is visible presence of ash, silt and small debris.
• If you suspect or know a sand box was impacted by fire or firefighting materials, the sand should be replaced.

**Residential Pools**
Wildfires may impact residential pools and make them unsafe to use. There may be structural damage to the pool basin or equipment. Ash, soot, and chemicals used to fight the fire may have impacted the quality of water. If the pool water was not circulating or was not treated, harmful bacteria may have grown in the stagnant water. Work with a pool service company to restore your swimming pool and ensure it is safe to use. Small whirlpools (hot tubs) should be drained, scrubbed clean, and re-filled. Balance the water prior to using the whirlpool.

**Clean up fire retardant and residue**
Health and safety of retardants used in BC has been reviewed. In the long term, environmental toxicity is low because products degrade over time and turn into fertilizer. The following precautions are recommended:

If your home was sprayed with fire retardants or was impacted by windblown fire retardant, these products need to be removed from the outside siding and roof of your house, your vehicles, and any outside toys, furniture, tools etc. before you move back home. A fire restoration contractor will be able to help you with this.

If you decide to manage this yourself:
• Wash down your home’s roof and siding, vehicles, and outdoor patio furniture with clean water.
• **Never use Bleach**, as the reaction between bleach and the fire retardants will produce harmful and explosive gases.
• To clean windows and glass, use clean water and a razor blade tool to help to remove the sticky residue.
• Rinse retardant off vegetation.
• Use mild detergent and clean water to wash children’s outside toys, play equipment, and recreational equipment to remove any residual fire retardant.
• Keep your pets and children away from any water pooling from these cleaning activities.
• Consult your family physician as soon as possible if you experience a reaction.
Drinking Water Supplies
Fire retardant contaminated water is not considered harmful. Open sources (e.g. ponds, dugouts) may receive small amounts of retardant overspray during fire application. This will have no appreciable effect on the quality or toxicity of the water supply. Water containing small amounts of retardant could taste slightly salty and may not, consequently, be palatable. Immediate medical attention would not be considered necessary except in rare cases involving adverse reactions based on individual intolerances or allergic reactions.

Fruit and Vegetable Gardens
It may not be safe to eat fruits or vegetables that were growing above ground during the fire, especially if they came into contact with fire retardants.

- Discard fruits and vegetables if visible fire-suppressant residues are present.
- Rinse fire retardant off vegetation such as trees, shrubs and plants, if possible.
- Regularly wet down your garden and lawn until the smoke and ash have been diluted and/or reabsorbed into the air. Ash and soot on vegetation will continue to emit smoke odours for some time.

For more information, please see http://www.bccdc.ca/Documents/fire_retardants.pdf

Septic Systems
If a home is directly impacted by a wildfire, there is a possibility that some parts of the sewage disposal system may be damaged. There is also the possibility that wildfire response activities can damage the sewage system, such as heavy equipment or trucks driving over the dispersal field.

- If the home was directly impacted by the fire, or if the fire was in close proximity to the home and there is concern about the functionality or safety of the sewage disposal system after a visual assessment by band staff or an EHO, a Registered Onsite Wastewater Practitioner (ROWP) should be retained to perform an assessment of the system and make recommendations for its repair. These individuals can be found by searching your geographic region at http://owrp.asttbc.org/rowp-finder/
- There may be damage to a sewerage system that is not visible. Take a conservative approach when determining whether to retain the services of a ROWP. Systems with additional electrical components, such as dosing pumps or secondary treatment, should also be assessed to ensure safety.
- If residents return home and find that their onsite sewerage systems are not operating as intended (e.g. drains are flowing slowly, signs of wastewater breaking out on soil), a ROWP should be contacted immediately for assessment and repair.

If you have any questions about sewage systems, or require further information, please contact your local FNHA Environmental Health Officer. For contact information, visit http://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/environmental-health
Air Quality
Smoky conditions can still be present after returning home. Health risks may be present under conditions of prolonged and heavy smoke conditions, and for specific sensitive populations.

Guidance for understanding and reducing health risks
http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/prevention-public-health/wildfire-smoke

Guide to creating a Clean Air Shelter

You can monitor general air quality conditions at:

BC Air Quality Health Index
https://www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/bc.airquality/data/aqhi-table.html

Canada Smoke Forecast
https://firesmoke.ca/forecasts/current/