



Memo: Get Smart about Wildfire Smoke - Clear Guidelines for Schools and Wildfire Smoke

Over the last decade, devastating wildfires have ravaged communities and school districts in every corner of this state.

These massive disasters impacted tens of thousands of Californians in the communities they call home and blanketed entire regions of California with thick, unhealthy smoke.

When a wildfire occurs nearby, the decision to close or evacuate a school is straightforward. However, as we have seen over the past several years, wildfire smoke can settle in communities hundreds of miles from the location of the fire and impact the health of students and school district operations.

Without clear state guidelines, districts have been forced to make difficult, last minute decisions on whether to cancel classes, remain open, or modify school events.

This is why leaders from the education, air quality, and public health communities established a working group to develop state guidance regarding air quality for California's 1,026 school districts during wildfire smoke days.

The guidelines attached to this message are intended to advance local conversations between school districts, public health officers, air districts, and the community, and provide educational leaders with the data they need to make informed decisions when their communities are inundated with wildfire smoke.

The guidelines are not meant to supersede any protocols or guidelines school districts may have already adopted.

We encourage districts that haven't already addressed this issue to begin the conversation now, prior to the start of the 2019-20 school year. California's next big wildfire is not a matter of if, but when.

For questions on how to track air quality in your community, please contact your local air district. To find which air district serves your community, visit <https://www.arb.ca.gov/app/dislookup/dislookup.php>.

Thank you for your partnership on this critical issue.