

Preparing for Wildfire Season: Protecting Your Indoor Air from Smoke

Each year, wildfires and their accompanying smoke impact millions across the United States. Recently, wildfire smoke has significantly affected air quality in areas like Winnebago, pushing it into unhealthy levels. As we approach wildfire season, it's crucial to take proactive steps to protect yourself and your loved ones.

During a wildfire, local officials may recommend staying indoors. However, it's important to know that smoke can still infiltrate your home, making indoor air unhealthy to breathe. This is especially concerning for vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, and individuals with heart or lung conditions. Here are several steps you can take now to safeguard your family from wildfire smoke:



1. Invest in Air Cleaners

- **Portable Air Cleaners:** If you opt for a portable air cleaner, choose one that is appropriately sized for the room you plan to use it in. Ensure it does not emit ozone.
- **DIY Air Cleaners:** If purchasing an air cleaner isn't feasible, consider making a DIY air cleaner. You can create one by attaching one or more furnace filters to a box fan using tape, brackets, or bungee cords. This serves as a temporary but effective alternative.



2. Upgrade Your HVAC System

- **High-Efficiency Filters:** If you're looking to enhance your HVAC system's filtration, choose a filter with a MERV rating of at least 13, or the highest rating compatible with your system. Consulting a professional HVAC technician can help you select the best filter for your needs.

3. Familiarize Yourself with Your HVAC System

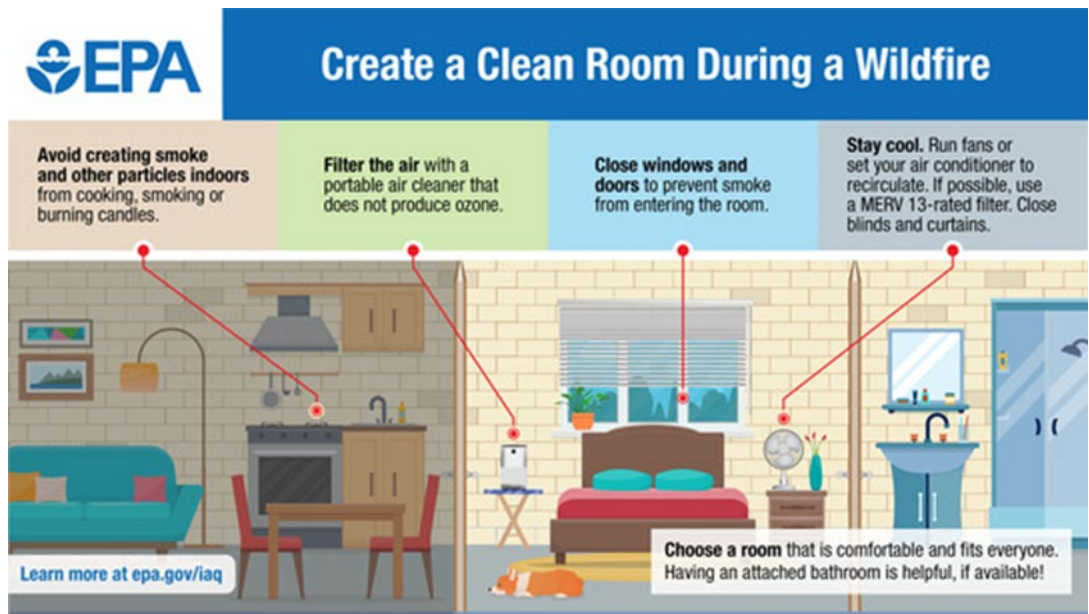
- Understanding how to adjust your HVAC system or air conditioner can help minimize smoke entry into your home. Know the settings that can enhance indoor air quality during smoke events.

4. Keep N95 Respirator Masks Ready

- Consider stocking up on N95 respirator masks, which can be found at hardware stores or pharmacies. Ensure you select masks labeled as "particulate respirators" tested and approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Look for the "NIOSH" label along with either "N95" or "P100."

5. Create a Clean Room

- Designate a clean room in your home to maintain the lowest possible levels of smoke and particulates during wildfire events. This room should be free from smoke-generating activities like cooking or smoking, with doors and windows kept closed to prevent smoke infiltration. A portable air cleaner can also be used in this room to improve air quality further.



Taking these proactive measures will help ensure that you and your family remain safe and healthy during wildfire season. Being prepared can make all the difference in maintaining indoor air quality in the face of wildfire smoke.

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