

Smoke, wildfire protection go hand-in-hand

By Mandy Kendall

With the effects of wildfires evident all around us during the last few days, it is not easy to ignore the potential threat that is on our very own doorstep, and in our own backyards.

The smoke is an ever present reminder that we live in a potentially hazardous place that requires respect and preparation.



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With that in mind, I decided to devote this week's *Qwik-e* tips for prevention of, protection from, and preparation for wildfires. Many of these will be familiar, common sense tactics but it doesn't do any harm to go over them.

Prevention

- Defensible space – Far too much information to go into here but CalFire have a great website with information about defensible space preparation, emergency kits etc.
- Chipping service – Keeping your yard clear of dead, dry foliage can be a huge help in preventing possible fires around your home. Your local fire prevention team may offer a service where they will come to your property and turn shrub and tree debris into wood chip (and some offer to haul the chip away

too).

- Open flames – It goes without saying that any open flame is an accident waiting to happen. Candles, barbecues, fires, etc should certainly not be left unattended (or even lighted in the first place), but you should also consider things like cigarettes that you think you may have extinguished but are really still smoldering and just waiting to catch something on fire. Think about having a fire bucket with sand in it for proper outside disposal of things like cigarettes and matches.

Protection

- Masks – Many are not designed to filter out much more than large particles of dust (during construction, etc.) so do not rely on them to protect you from the smoke particles unless the packaging indicates otherwise.

- Exercise – Any exertion outside will increase the amount of smoke inhalation and potential lung damage. Keep activity to a minimum. Try exercising in a gym, or taking your walks in an enclosed area like a shopping mall.

- Portable air purifiers – These can be very effective at clearing the airspace in your home. At least two are suggested. One for the living area and one for the bedroom, as it can take up to two hours to clear the air in a room so it would not be effective immediately if you were to take it from your living room to your bedroom with you.

- AC – In the house and in the car, can be effective in helping to recycle air indoors rather than keep bringing fresh polluted air from outside. Just make sure that you keep the fresh air intake closed so you just recycle air only. Also be sure to check the filters, as they will likely need changing more frequently.

- Children and pets – These two groups are potentially more vulnerable than others. Their respiration rates are higher

than adults so they breathe in more air, especially when active. Try to keep them indoors as much as possible. Keep a look out for running red eyes, sneezing or coughing. Doctors and vets can offer advice on how best to treat the effects of smoke inhalation.

- Cleaning – Dust surfaces with a damp cloth to help prevent stirring the settled ash up into the air again. Some vacuums will also just re-distribute the ash into the atmosphere so limit vacuuming if possible.

Preparation

- Supplies – A large supply of water contained near your house may help extinguish a fire as well as provide drinking water in an emergency.

- Personal documents – Keeping important personal and family documents in one place will make emergency evacuations quick and simple.

- Family exit plan – Have a practice run with your family to make sure everyone knows the quickest way out of the house from every room. Agree on a meeting place, away from the house, for everyone to gather at following an evacuation. Appoint someone you know, who lives away from your area, as a central contact point. Should you be unable to connect with any of your family during an emergency you will at least have one person that everyone calls to let them know they are safe.

Until next time.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe, which aligns wellness seekers with their ideal wellness provider. If you have questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and well-being topic, drop her an email at connect@healthconnective.com or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a

time.