



# Wildfire Smoke Communications Templates

## For Administrators

Effective communication is crucial for health centers and clinics to ensure the safety and well-being of their patients and staff during wildfire smoke. This document provides guidance and sample messages that can be used to disseminate important information and alerts before, during, and after wildfire smoke.

### Before wildfire smoke

#### Recorded phone message or email – preparedness

Wildfires across [impacted region] are creating hazardous and smoky conditions. Smoke from the [impacted region] fires may drift into [your community's name] and rapidly reduce air quality.

If you suffer from asthma, COPD, heart failure, or any other chronic respiratory or heart conditions, plan for how you will protect yourself from harmful wildfire smoke.

Check air quality at [local official site] to know your level of danger and exposure. Ensure you have back up medications safely stored in a possible evacuation bag. Keep up to date on evacuation warnings here: [insert local resource for evacuations]

In the meantime, limit exertion and exercise, especially outdoors. If possible, stay inside in a designated clean room. Information on how to set up your own clean room at home can be found here: [How to Set Up Your Own Clean Room at Home](#)

#### Social media post or text message – staying informed

Air quality will likely get worse throughout the day and into tomorrow. Keep up to date with changes in air quality and evacuation orders through:

- [insert appropriate link for air quality monitoring for your community]
- [insert appropriate link for evacuation updates for your community]

## Social media post or text message - health risks

Smoke, ash, and fire suppressant chemicals can be harmful to your health!

If you have: respiratory illnesses, heart disease, or cerebral vascular disease you are at higher risk from the effects of a wildfire.

Stay inside a clean room ([How to Set Up Your Own Clean Room at Home](#)).

Limit exertion and exercise, especially outdoors.

If your usual symptoms worsen, contact your doctor immediately.

## Social media post or text message – prepare for evacuation

[Your clinic's name] anticipates that an evacuation order may be given in the next [anticipated time frame, 12, 24, 36 hours...]. Everyone should prepare to evacuate. Remember to bring:

- Face coverings (ideally N-95 to protect against ash, smoke, and chemicals)
- All medications plus a buffer stock for 7 days
- Medical paperwork, including a list of all conditions, medications and dosages taken
- Charged essential medical equipment and back up batteries.
- All assistive devices including eyeglasses, dentures, hearing aids, and communication devices
- Medical insurance information
- Photo ID

## During wildfire smoke

### Recorded phone message or email – general health

Smoke from wildfires is a mixture of gases and fine particles from burning trees and other plant materials. Smoke can hurt your eyes, irritate your respiratory system, and worsen chronic heart and lung diseases.

Smoke may be affecting you if you experience:

- Cough
- Scratchy throat
- Irritated sinuses
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Stinging eyes

## Recorded phone message, email, or social media post – clinic status

[Clinic name] is open for [specify services] services from [opening time] to [closing time]. Due to damage at our normal location, we are currently providing services at [address / location].

*Note: Only include the second sentence if your clinic has changed location.*

## Email, flyer, or long social media post – general health

[Clinic's name] recommends the following steps to avoid illness caused by breathing wildfire smoke.

Those with lung or heart disease, the elderly and children, should stay indoors when smoke outside is thick. Poor air quality is a health threat. All residents in smoky communities should avoid it. Local smoke levels can rise and fall rapidly as the wind and weather change.

Take steps to avoid breathing problems or other symptoms from smoke:

- Be aware of smoke levels, in your area. [Provide local resource for information].
- Avoid working or exercising outdoors when air quality is poor. Limit outdoor sports, work and recreation.
- Drink lots of water. Staying hydrated keeps airways moist. This will help reduce irritation of the nose, throat, and lungs.
- Try to avoid driving in smoky areas. If you need to drive in these areas, keep your windows rolled up and vents closed. Set the air conditioning on “re-circulate.” This will avoid bringing smoke into your car.
- Avoid smoke by staying indoors and closing all windows and doors. Use a filter in your heating and cooling system that removes very fine particles.
- People with asthma or other on-going lung disease should follow their breathing management plans. Keep medications available. Contact your health care provider if you need medical care.

## Social media or text message – carbon monoxide poisoning

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a significant threat to people living close to the site of the fire. Carbon monoxide makes it harder for your blood to carry oxygen to your brain and other vital organs. In high concentrations it can result in death.

Watch out for signs of CO poisoning:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Confusion

- Chest pain

If you become confused, you may not be aware of your symptoms, help your friends, family, and neighbors watch out for each other. Anyone with signs of CO poisoning should visit the emergency department immediately for evaluation.

## Social media or text message – heat risk at home

Keeping doors and windows closed is important to reduce smoke exposure. If you don't have air conditioning, your home may get overheated. Consider visiting family members, neighbors or public buildings that have air conditioning and air filtration. Leaving the area of thick smoke may be best for those with health conditions that put them at higher risk for illness.

## After wildfire smoke

### Recorded phone message or email – clinic status

[Clinic name has / has not] experienced significant damage as a result of the [name] wildfire. We are working to get all services up and running as soon as possible.

[To the degree possible, provide a brief overview of the damage and steps taken so far towards restoration.]

Currently [X] services are available at [location]. If you urgently need [unavailable services], please seek treatment at [name and address of partner clinic or hospital.]

### Social media or text message - safety

Like you, the clinic staff have just been allowed back into [impacted area] and we will begin inspecting the damage to our facility. Stay safe as you begin to assess the damage from fire, smoke, ash, and fire suppressant chemicals to your home.

Remember:

Do not enter until it is safe to do so. First observe from the outside, looking for embers and smoldering.

Look for obvious structural damage, downed power lines and the smell of gas. Alert utilities companies as necessary.

Ash and chemicals from fire suppressants can be irritating to the skin, eyes, and lungs. Wear gloves, goggles, an N-95 mask, long sleeves and pants, and thick soled shoes. If you are exposed, wash the area quickly with soap and clean water.

