

# Wildfire Cleanup: Protecting Your Lungs

Smoke and ash during or after a wildfire can be irritating to eyes, nose, throat and lungs. Wearing a particulate respirator can help protect your lungs from effects due to smoke or ash exposure.

**Be advised, wearing a particulate respirator may make it more difficult to breathe; if you have heart or respiratory conditions, check with your healthcare provider before you use a mask.**

**Particulate masks will not protect you from harmful vapors or chemical exposures.**



N95 particulate respirators will protect your lungs from wildfire smoke and ash. Straps must go above and below the ears.



A one-strap paper mask will NOT protect your lungs from wildfire smoke or ash particles.



A surgical mask will NOT protect your lungs from wildfire smoke or ash.

## How to Choose the Correct Mask to Protect Your Lungs

- Choose a mask called a “**particulate respirator**” that has the word “**NIOSH**” and either “**N95**” or “**P100**” printed on it. These are sold at many hardware and home repair stores and pharmacies.
- Choose a mask that has **two straps** that go around your head. **DO NOT** choose a mask with only one strap or one with straps that just hook over the ears.
- Choose a size that will fit over your nose and under your chin. It should seal tightly to your face. These masks do not come in sizes that fit young children.
- Do not use bandanas (wet or dry), paper or surgical masks, or tissues held over the mouth and nose. These will not protect your lungs from wildfire smoke or debris.

## How to Use a Mask

- Place the mask over your nose and under your chin, with one strap placed below the ears and one strap above.
- Pinch the metal part of the mask tightly over the top of your nose.
- The mask fits best on clean-shaven skin.
- Throw out your mask when it gets harder to breathe through or if the inside gets dirty. Use a new mask each day if you can.
- It is harder to breathe through a mask, so take breaks often
- If you feel dizzy or nauseated, go to an area with less smoke/ash, take off your mask, and get medical help.
- If you have a heart or lung problem, consult with your doctor before using a mask.
- Remove earrings and jewelry before donning or doffing equipment to prevent catching them on the respirator.
- Check in a mirror to ensure that your respirator fits properly.