

## ***Wildfire Smoke: A Guide for Public Health Officials*** **2016 Status Report**

EPA, along with the assistance and expertise of federal and state partners, updated the *Wildfire Smoke: A Guide for Public Health Officials* (Wildfire Guide) in May 2016. This draft Guide, which was last revised in 2008, provides readily available information that outlines whose health is most affected by wildfire smoke, how to reduce exposure to smoke, what public health actions are recommended, and how to communicate air quality to the public. This effort aims to educate personal and community actions as well as decision-making in response to wildfire smoke emissions.

The Guide has been revised because there is now a stronger evidence base available. Information within the Guide includes the characteristics of wildfire smoke, particulate matter level estimates, health effects of smoke and at-risk populations, strategies to reduce smoke exposure (indoor and outdoor), and recommended public health actions (based on NowCast). Appendices include information on protecting indoor workers from smoke, respirator use, clean up, cleaner air shelters, and smoke alert examples. Upgrades include better defined health effects and information on children's health. The updated Guide, apart from having up-to-date information and guidance, provides an opportunity for state environment and health officials to provide consistent guidance to the public over large geographical areas often times involving multiple states. This information also supplements ongoing ASTHO and ECOS efforts to address public health issues caused by environmental exposures.

In order to ensure the relevance and usefulness of the Wildfire Guide for state programs, EPA partnered with ECOS and ASTHO to provide comments for revising the document prior to the 2016 fire season, to coordinate state and local agencies to "test drive" this version during the 2016 wildfire season, and to provide EPA feedback to use in developing a final Guide in the winter of 2016-2017.

The overall product of this work will be a final Wildfire Guide that reflects state input, addresses state needs, and is useful to states. To achieve this, ECOS worked with state environmental agencies and the state air associations (the Association of Air Pollution Control Agencies (AAPCA) and the National Association of Clean Air Agencies (NACAA)), and ASTHO worked with the state health agencies and the state environmental health directors to review and provide comments on the initial proposed revisions; pilot the draft revised Guide during the 2016 fire season; and provide additional comments and feedback to EPA based on the pilots.

The Wildfire Guide is the product of a collaborative effort by scientists, air quality specialists and public health professionals from federal, state and local agencies, and it has been widely used by state and local agencies in wildland fire situations. EPA's Office of Air and Radiation and Office of Research and Development have coordinated state input with other federal partners such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and U.S. Forest Service.

### ***Deliverables***

- States reviewed and provided feedback to EPA on initial revisions to Guide (April-May 2016)
- States piloted the revised Guide during the 2016 fire season (June-September 2016)
- States provided comments on draft revised version, based on use during 2016 fire season (September-October 2016)

### ***Next Steps***

- EPA and federal partners will use state feedback to create a final Guide, which is expected to be distributed in time for the 2017 fire season
- In consultation with EPA and other federal partners, states will help develop and implement outreach and communications strategies to promote the Guide's use by state programs and partners (Spring 2017)

For more information, find the Wildfire Guide (Revised Draft May 2016):

[https://www3.epa.gov/airnow/wildfire\\_may2016.pdf](https://www3.epa.gov/airnow/wildfire_may2016.pdf)