How does climate change contribute to wildfires?

- Extreme heat and long droughts make wildfires larger and more frequent in many regions.

How do wildfires affect young children’s health?

- Breathing Problems
  - Smoke and ash can irritate the eyes and lungs and can cause breathing problems in children. Children with asthma or allergies are especially sensitive.
- Mental Health
  - Children may feel anxious or fearful.

Child-Related Action Steps:

Prevention:
- Seal leaks, cracks and holes, and install weather stripping around doorways.
- Install a high-efficiency filter (MERV 13+) in your central air conditioner unit and/or have a portable HEPA air purifier. Keep backup filters on hand.
- Keep N95 masks on hand in case you need to go outside.
- Keep supplies available, including bottled water, at least a week’s worth of medication, first-aid kit, and batteries.
- If a family member has asthma, have a written Asthma Action Plan.

During a Wildfire:
- Check your air quality.
  - Air quality conditions can change quickly, so check your local air quality at airnow.gov.
- Stay inside.
  - Keep doors and windows closed and stay inside when air quality is unhealthy.
- Filter the indoor air.
  - Run your AC unit with a high efficiency filter (MERV 13+) or use a HEPA room air purifier.
- Avoid outdoor physical activity.
  - In smoky conditions, avoid vigorous physical activity to limit the amount of smoke breathed into the lungs.

This factsheet was developed by the APHA Environment Section’s Children’s Environmental Health Committee.
Child-Related Action Steps:

During a Wildfire:
- **Lower levels of indoor air pollution.**
  - Use cooking methods that create less smoke like boiling or steaming.
  - Avoid grilling or frying food.
  - Avoid using wood-burning appliances or candles/incense.
- **Use masks when outdoors.**
  - Wear a well-fitted N95 mask if you go outdoors: A well-fitting KN95, KF94, or surgical mask is better than wearing no mask if N95 masks are not available.
  - Dust masks, bandanas and breathing through a wet cloth will not protect your child from smoke.
- **Seek medical care if needed.**
  - If your child has severe trouble breathing or change in their health condition, consult your child’s health care provider.
- **Ensure generator safety.**
  - If you plan to use a backup generator, make sure it is outside at least 20 feet away from your home. Install a carbon monoxide (CO) alarm inside your home.

After a Wildfire:
- Wear gloves, goggles, long sleeves and pants, and a well-fitted N95 mask when cleaning up ash.
- Mist the ash with water, then gently sweep and dispose in a trash bag.
- Wash off all outdoor toys and do not let children play in ash.

Resources:
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).