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## OFFICIALS REMIND FLORIDIANS OF HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH WILDFIRE SMOKE



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**Fernandina Beach Fla.**— Due to recent events, the Florida Department of Health in Nassau County (DOH Nassau) cautions everyone about the health effects of wildfire smoke as a respiratory irritant, which can cause scratchy throat, coughing, headaches or irritated eyes and nose. Smoky conditions continue to occur in Nassau County from wildfires in the Okefenokee Swamp, located to the west of Nassau County, in southeastern Georgia and northern Florida. The smoke comes from drifting wildfires and the smoke intensity will vary according to wind conditions. Breathing in smoke can worsen asthma, and other chronic lung or heart conditions. Dust generated from increased wildfire response activity on dirt roads may also worsen these conditions.

### **Ways to protect yourself and your family from smoke:**

- Pay attention to local air quality reports, news coverage or health warnings related to smoke.
- Avoid prolonged outdoor activities. This is especially important for children and persons with pre-existing medical conditions.
- Keep indoor air as clean as possible. Stay indoors and run your air conditioner, if you have one. Keep windows and doors closed as much as possible. Keep the fresh air intake closed and the filter clean to prevent bringing additional smoke inside. For best results, run the air conditioning with recirculated air. **If you do not have an air conditioner, staying inside with the windows closed maybe dangerous in extremely hot weather. In these cases, seek alternative shelter.**
- Avoid activities that increase indoor pollution. When smoke levels are high, try to avoid using anything that burns, such as wood fireplaces, gas logs, gas stoves and candles. Do not vacuum, which stirs up particles already inside you home. Do not smoke.
- Follow your doctor's advice about taking medicines and following the individual asthma management care plan if you or a loved one has asthma or other lung disease. Call your doctor if symptoms worsen.
- If you have to be outside being prepared is key. Be mindful of the air quality conditions where you will be spending time outdoors. Stay tuned into special advisory warnings for the area. Note that wearing a special N95 or P100 respirator mask can help protect you against fine particles found in smoke. Paper or surgical masks are not effective in preventing inhalation of smoke.

- Pets can experience eye, respiratory tracts, skin and other body systems irritates. Keep pets indoors as much as possible during this time. Call your veterinarian if your pet experiences any symptoms.
- It is important to use caution if you are working, driving or recreating outdoors during the evening and overnight hours to avoid excessive intake of smoke pollutants. Staying indoors is advised during this time.

Wildfire activity is being monitored by the Florida Forest Service, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS). A map of the wildfires and the latest information on the status of Florida wildfires can be obtained at the Florida Fire Service website at <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/Wildland-Fire/Current-Fire-Conditions>

For additional information, contact DOH Nassau, Kim Geib, DNP, ARNP, A-GNP-C, CPH, Public Health Manager at (904) 875-6100, or visit the DOH Nassau website at <http://Nassau.Floridahealth.gov/>

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