



Study finds wildfire smoke more harmful to humans than pollution from cars

By Nathan Rott, NPR, March 5, 2021

“Tens of millions of Americans experienced at least a day last year shrouded in wildfire smoke. Entire cities were blanketed, in some cases for weeks, as unprecedented wildfires tore across the Western U.S., causing increases in hospitalizations for respiratory emergencies and concerns about [people’s longer-term health](#).

“[New] research, [published in the journal *Nature Communications*](#) (open access) on [March 5, 2021], paints a worrisome picture for Americans living on a fire-prone continent, especially as climate change amplifies fire risk worldwide.

“ ‘[T]here’s been a lot of work that has shown that the health impacts due to wildfire smoke are on the same order of magnitude, or possibly even greater, than [direct physical costs, such as firefighting and damage to property],’ said study co-author [Tom Corringham](#).

“ ‘A lot of the mitigation for exposure relies on people and households and communities knowing when to avoid smoke exposure,’ said [Sheryl Magzamen](#), an associate professor at Colorado State University who focuses on the health effects of wildfire smoke and was not involved in the study. ‘We don’t have the mechanisms right now to let people understand when they’re being exposed to smoke.’

“Corringham says the new research shows the need to improve air monitoring systems and public health programs. He suggests providing financial aid to at-risk populations and low-income households so they can purchase air filters. And he urges action to minimize global warming.”

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