

Educational settings and bushfire smoke

Guidance for School and College principals and managers of Childcare and other early childhood settings

Bushfire smoke will continue to affect Tasmania during February.

The smoke will vary – it may be light or heavy and may last from several hours to days. Smoke may affect places that are far away from fire. People anywhere in the state can expect to experience smoke at times during February.

Parts of southern Tasmania experienced extremely high and potentially harmful levels of smoke in late January, and more smoke in this region is expected through February.

Most school age children can cope with periods of moderately poor air quality but may experience itchy eyes and throat irritation.

Some children of school age or younger are more at risk of health harms from smoke. These more vulnerable children include those aged less than 5 years and those of any age with asthma or other chronic medical conditions.

Any members of staff who are pregnant, aged 65 years or older, or who have chronic illnesses, particularly asthma, chronic bronchitis, emphysema, diabetes, angina or a previous heart attack are also more at risk.

Ensure children and students with asthma have a current asthma action plan and staff know how to follow this.

Children and staff who are more at risk of health harms from smoke should minimise their exposure to smoke.

If you can see or smell smoke outside, you can reduce exposure to smoke by:

- Not running outdoor physical activities. Exercise increases breathing so you inhale more smoke particles.
- Keep children and students indoors with windows and doors closed. Switch air conditioners to 'recycle' or 'recirculate'. Open the windows and air out rooms when there is a break in smoky conditions.

Get urgent medical care for anyone experiencing breathing difficulties who does not respond to initial management.

For more information, visit www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/alerts/air/bushfire_smoke

Guidance for managers of community Libraries

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Community libraries can provide local communities in smoke-affected areas with a place of cleaner air.

During smoky conditions, keep windows and doors closed. Switch air conditioners to 'recycle' or 'recirculate'. Open the windows and air out rooms when there is a break in smoky conditions.

Get urgent medical care for anyone who experiences breathing difficulties.

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Health related content for newsletters circulated by Schools and other Education settings to parents/carers

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It is most important that children with conditions such as asthma have a current action plan from their GP and it is shared with their school.

Exposure to smoke will be managed by:

- Keeping classrooms as free of smoke as possible by closing windows and doors
- Setting air-conditioning to recycle
- Not running outdoor activities when it is smoky

Real-time data on air quality at over 30 sites in Tasmania is provided by the Environment Protection Authority at

<https://epa.tas.gov.au/epa/air/monitoring-air-pollution/real-time-air-quality-data-for-tasmania>

More information about smoke and health is available at
https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/alerts/air/bushfire_smoke

[Additional content to be provided by DoE or education setting about liaising closely with emergency services, health and other agencies about fire threats and environmental conditions, and the prospect of school closures if such threats pose a risk]