



## GUIDANCE AND RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS STAYING OPEN DURING WILDFIRES

### Deciding to open/close:

- Most of you have already made your decision about whether to open or close school today. Either way, we remind you that if you chose to open today and have students coming in the front doors now, you're always able to conduct a mid-day closure in the event you need to, or proactively wish to, evacuate.

### If you are open:

- Monitor Air Quality through a reliable tool. [AirNow](#) is a great resource that enables you to enter your city or Zip Code to assess your air quality. Regardless of what tool you're using, note that most tools are monitoring the air quality based on a focused period of time, typically 2 - 12 hours in the past. If you smell smoke or see ash, the air quality is unhealthy - in spite of what it might show on the monitoring tool. Trust your senses.
- Based on the conditions you observe, consider the following precautions:
  - Manage HVAC System:
    - Turn off the unit(s). Unhealthy air outside will be pulled in by the HVAC unit and may cause damage to the unit as well as blow poor quality air around your building(s).
    - Replace the filters next week. After the fires burn, the filters are likely to be clogged with ash and debris. Replace these before reactivating the system. Of note, the companies you use to replace these will be busy - call today to make your appointment.
  - Monitor for Health Issues:
    - Keep an eye out for students and staff exhibiting any of the following symptoms:
      - Coughing
      - Throat irritation
      - Pain, burning, or discomfort in the chest when taking a deep breath
      - Chest tightness, wheezing, or shortness of breath
  - Limit or eliminate outdoor activity:
    - Lunch, recess, PE and other outdoor activity should be limited or cancelled for the day. Children exposed to poor quality air - especially during high activity - can develop a variety of illnesses and injuries from that air.
  - Limit outside air entering campus:
    - Close large gaps in doorways and windows with tape, towels or fabric to limit airflow into classrooms and other spaces.
  - Provide counseling and support:
    - Though your school may not be directly impacted, many students, families and school employees have homes that have been evacuated or damaged in the fires. Proactively monitor your community and provide support where needed.
  - Assess family needs:
    - If you are near a fire and/or aware that a large contingent of your families have been evacuated or had homes impacted, consider starting a spreadsheet to assess the needs of families and of employees. Families may need places to stay, people to care for animals, playdates/babysitting while they handle evacuation related duties.
  - Provide protective gear for outdoor workers:

- Security, facilities, maintenance, construction crews, etc. may need to be outside for extended periods of time to manage their responsibilities. Provide N95 rated masks to help protect them from exposure to smoke and debris.
- Consider mid-day evacuation:
  - If you are in an area that is evacuated later in the day, be prepared to activate your emergency notification system to summon parents to campus to pick up students, and consider arranging with a bus company to have them on standby or even at school to help facilitate an expeditious evacuation. Assess the number of faculty/staff vehicles on campus and if the need arose, whether you would be able to load students in those and evacuate.
  - Gather your most important items and secure them in an evacuation-ready stance. A few items to include are:
    - HR Files
    - Student files (if hard copy)
    - Petty cash
    - Check stock
    - Legal papers/501(c)3 documentation
    - Any items which may be symbolic or meaningful to your community (paintings, portraits, trophies) - If your school is damaged, it's helpful to have symbolic items that reinforce the values of your community and create hope.