

“During a Wildfire” - Sample Social Media Statement

Local food producers: The recent wildfires are creating dangerous air pollution in our region. The biggest threat to your health is from inhaling the smoke. Protect your lungs by staying indoors whenever possible, and wearing a respirator mask when outdoors. An N95 respirator is the minimum protection recommended, while a P100 will provide additional protection from petroleum-based chemicals and smaller particles. Employers of outdoor workers should consider adequate protection for their workers, such as limiting the time that employees work outside and providing adequate respiratory protective equipment (see California Code of Regulations Title 8 section 3203, Injury and Illness Prevention Program, and section 5141, Control of Harmful Exposure to Employees).

During the fires in Sonoma County last fall 2017, many local food growers expressed concern about the impact of the wildfire smoke on the food safety of our local produce. Since then, a group of researchers and concerned community members have been investigating this question. The Produce Safety after Urban Wildfire project will be releasing a final report in early 2019. However, due to this current air pollution emergency, we would like to share that the lab results from our 2017 plant samples **do not** show extensive contamination of produce exposed to wildfire smoke, and our findings suggest a low health risk from ingesting produce exposed to wildfire smoke. Fresh produce, especially green leafy vegetables, are critical for nutrition and promoting the body's resilience to the health impacts of smoke. To further reduce risk of contamination, wash produce with running water and remove outer leaves or peels and wash hands after harvesting produce or coming in contact with soil and ash.

Some groups are more vulnerable to health impacts from the smoke and should take extra precaution during this time, including children, elders, and people with respiratory and heart conditions. If you are a garden educator working with kids, please consider activities that can be done inside until air quality improves.

We encourage our community to continue supporting our local food system and sharing our online resources with all those concerned, including our “Understanding Risk” community guide:

<https://ucanr.edu/sites/SCREFC/files/294307.pdf>

See our website for more resources and information: ucanr.edu/produceafterfire

Sign-up for our google group of community members discussing these issues and sharing strategies:

<https://groups.google.com/forum/...>