

# SAFETY MATTERS FOR BUSH SMOKE

Current bushfire conditions throughout the eastern seaboard have resulted in very poor air quality. If you find yourself in an area affected by bushfire smoke it is recommended you take the following actions;

- Remain indoors and close all windows and doors and operate air-conditioners if available.
- All air conditioners should be switched to 'recycle' or 'recirculate' mode.
- If you do not have an air conditioner, take steps to reduce heat stress, especially for the very young, people who are unwell, or the elderly.
- People with pre-existing lung or heart conditions should rest as much as possible and keep away from the smoke.
- People with asthma should follow their personal asthma plan.
- Anyone with a heart or lung condition should follow the treatment plan advised by their doctor and keep at least five days' supply of medication on hand.
- Avoid physical activity outdoors this includes outdoor workplace activities (exertion allows more fine particles to be breathed deeper into the lungs).
- It is recommended that organisers of outdoor events should consider postponing the event until air quality improves.
- Assist your vulnerable family members, neighbours and friends. It is important to identify locations that have cleaner, filtered air-conditioned spaces (e.g. shopping centres, community centres, libraries etc).
- If there is a break in smoky conditions, take the opportunity to air out your home to improve indoor air quality.
- When indoors, minimise other sources of air pollution, such as cigarette smoke, burning candles, using unventilated gas appliances including gas stoves, or stirring up fine dust from sweeping or vacuuming.
- It is important to also stay hydrated by drinking water.
- Stay up to date with local news reports.

## **Do facemasks help?**

Ordinary paper dust masks, handkerchiefs or bandannas do not filter out fine particles from bushfire smoke and are generally not very useful in protecting your lungs.

Special face masks (called 'P2' masks) filter bushfire smoke providing greater protection against inhaling fine particles. They are available at most hardware stores.

**For further information.**

If you see smoke haze, check for fire warnings in your area:

- Listen to your local radio station for updates.
- Visit the State Fire Authority website.
- Call the States Bushfire Information Line.