



# Schools as Cleaner Air and Cooling Centers

## Tips for Parents and Caregivers

Communities are facing the impacts of climate change, including severe health consequences from heat waves and wildfires. EPA launched a pilot project in 2021 called Schools as Community Cleaner Air and Cooling Centers to address the combined hazards of extreme heat and wildfire smoke with a focus on spaces that serve children. The goals of this project are to support practical strategies for safeguarding children in schools during heat and smoke events. Parents and caregivers can be champions for facility improvements and other steps to keep kids safe during the school day and during heat and smoke events. This fact sheet can help you keep your children safe at home or at school.

### DOES YOUR SCHOOL HAVE A PLAN?

As each local municipality may have a different action plan for heat and smoke events, check in with school leadership to find out if the school follows any local, city, or state level plans. For example plans for smoke and heat safety in schools, please refer to the following resources: [Washington's Smoke from Wildfires – Toolkit](#) and [Arizona's Heat Safety - School Toolkit](#).

Parents and caregivers can work with school administrators, principals, and even teachers to find out answers to some of the following questions:

Does your child's classroom and other learning spaces have cooling capability? If not, what other measures are in place during extreme heat events?

Does your child's classroom have ventilation and filtration, and is this adjusted during wildfire smoke events? If not, would a letter of support or other action from parents and caregivers be helpful?

It is important to also check plans for transportation to and from school so that your child can be shielded from the heat or smoke during the ride to and from school. If your home has better air conditioning and air cleaning provisions than the classroom environment, a virtual alternative could be discussed with teachers and principals. Having fewer students in the classroom may help reduce the stress of the air conditioning units, thereby providing better relief for the students who rely on the classroom space as their main source of air conditioning and clean air.

### HOW TO TALK TO YOUR KIDS

As schools prepare physical buildings to be safe during extreme heat and wildfire smoke events, it is important for families and students to understand the risks and ways to stay safe, both in school and at home.

The following sources are available for caretakers to help understand and talk to their children about the dangers of heat and wildfire smoke. Information is constantly being updated and translated into more languages. Some key websites to check for the latest information include [www.heat.gov](http://www.heat.gov) and <https://www.airnow.gov/wildfires/>. Parents may also want to have [quick reference guides](#) to recognize signs and symptoms of heat-related illness.

### FOR CHILDREN: EXTREME HEAT

[CDC: Ready Wrigley Books](#)

Available in English and Spanish

Children's books on preparing for wildfires and smoke and one on extreme heat with dog Ready Wrigley

[Ready.gov Ready Kids | En español](#)

Tools, games, and information on preparing for disasters for kids, teens, parents, and people who work with kids.



## FOR CHILDREN: WILDFIRES AND AIR QUALITY

### [AirNow](#)

[Air Quality Flag Program for students](#) | [En español](#)

Includes resources to teach children about the environment, clean air, and wildfires

[Why is Coco Orange?](#) | [En español](#)

Children's book on air quality and staying healthy during poor air quality events

[Why is Coco Red?](#) | [En español](#)

Children's book on how wildfires can affect air quality and health

[Piplo Productions, Trinkka and Sam: The Big Fire](#)

Available in multiple languages

Story on recovery after a fire

[Ready.gov Ready Kids](#) | [En español](#)

Tools, games, and information on preparing for disasters for kids, teens, parents, and people who work with kids

## FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS: WILDFIRES AND AIR QUALITY

[Ready.gov Ready Kids](#) | [En español](#)

[EPA webinar with experts on wildfire smoke, mental health, and green cleaning](#)

Available in English and Spanish

[CDC: Protecting children from wildfire smoke](#)

Available in English and Spanish

[Western States Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit \(WSPEHSU\)](#)

Some information available in English and Spanish

[Wildfires and children's health](#)

[A Story of Health](#)

[National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(NCTSN\)](#)

Available in multiple languages | [Wildfire Resources](#)

## FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS: EXTREME HEAT

[CDC: Heat and Infants and Children](#)

Available in English and Spanish

[National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(NCTSN\)](#)

Information available in multiple languages

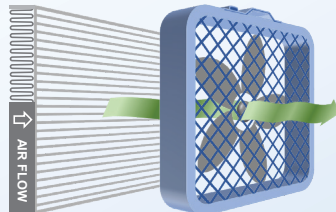
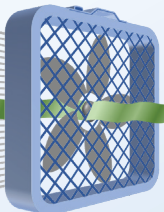



[Extreme Heat Resources](#)

[Sunwise](#) | Available in English and Spanish

## CLEAN AIR IN THE HOME

During a smoke event, upgraded air filters and portable air cleaners can improve air quality, and EPA has guidance on [Air Cleaners and Air Filters in the Home](#). EPA also offers guidance on how to [Create a Clean Room](#), or dedicated space with cleaner air during a wildfire. If air cleaners and filters are not available, a do-it-yourself (DIY) air cleaner may be a temporary solution. Steps and additional information on how to build your own DIY air cleaner can be found at the EPA's website here: : [Wildfires and Indoor Air Quality \(IAQ\)](#)

### DIY Air Cleaner to Reduce Wildfire Smoke Indoors

Materials	Assembly
 <p><b>20" X 20" air filter</b> Suggested rating: MERV 13</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Attach the air filter to the back of the box fan using either clamps, duct tape or bungee cords.</li><li>2. Check the filter for the direction of the air flow (marked on the side of the filter).</li><li>3. Replace filters when dirty.</li></ol>
 <p><b>20" X 20" box fan</b> Only use certified fans with UL or ETL marking (2012 model or newer)</p>	
 <p>Clamps</p>	 <p>Duct Tape</p>
 <p>Bungee Cords</p>	

Learn about box fan safety tips: <https://www.epa.gov/air-research/research-diy-air-cleaners-reduce-wildfire-smoke-indoors#FAQ>

Figure 1: DIY air cleaner instructions

CONTACT: [EPAChildren@epa.gov](mailto:EPAChildren@epa.gov)

