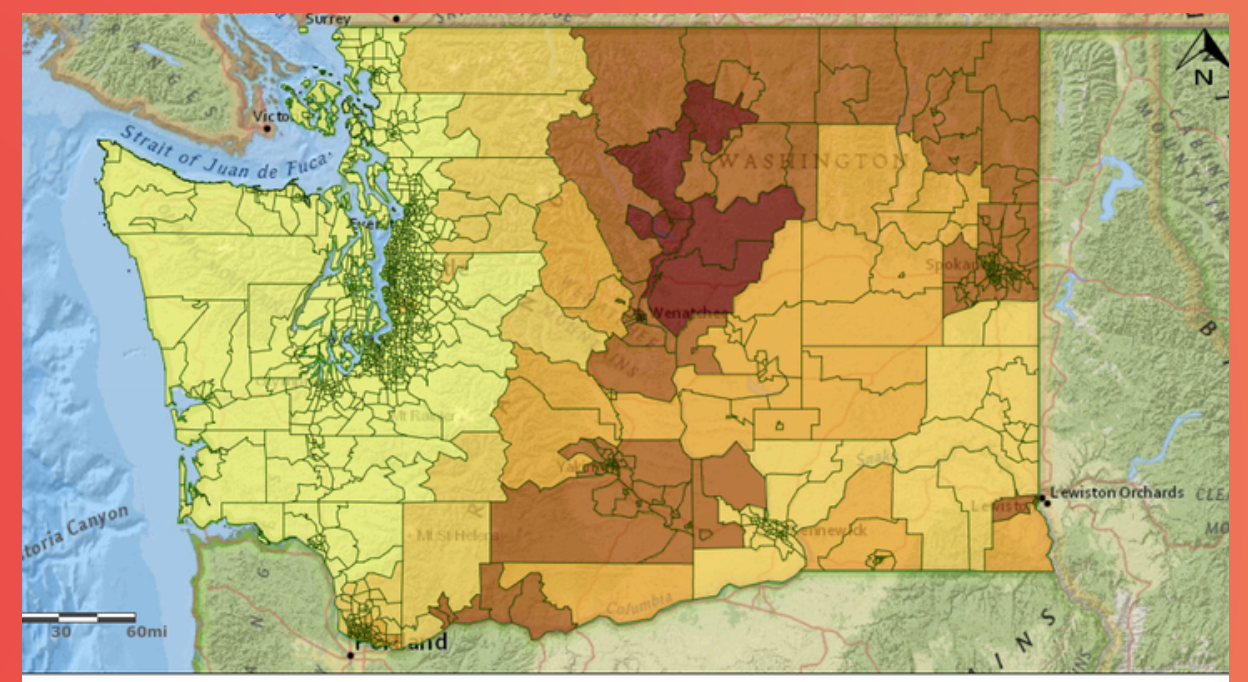
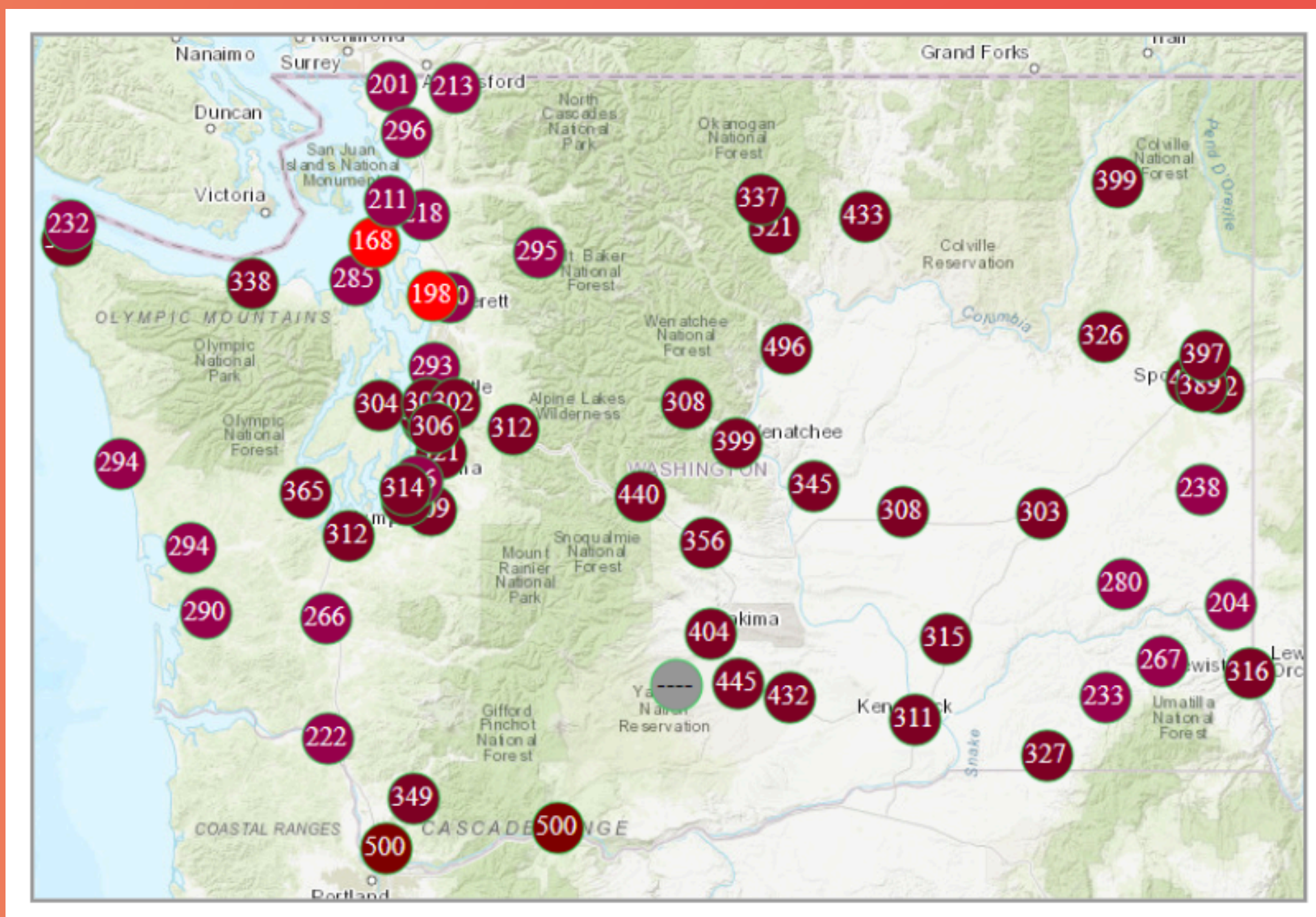


Wildfire Smoke

In Washington, the air we breathe isn't just crisp mountain air — it's wildfire smoke, rising asthma rates, and changing seasons. Climate change and air quality isn't something we can ignore any longer. This is about protecting our health, our forests, and our future.

Air Quality

There are two factors to wildfires in Washington. The first being the environment, specifically climate change. These environmental factors that lead to disasters are earlier snowmelt, rising temperatures which lead to long heat waves, drier summers that cause lower soil moisture, more fuels from dead trees and plants, and if greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, we can expect more wildfires, for longer seasons. Wildfires also release toxins into the air specifically Black carbon, a super pollutant released by wildfires, can absorb sunlight and contribute to global warming. The second cause of wildfires is human activity. However human activity is a correspondent to climate change. These conditions make it easier for people to start fires. Those fires may spread more rapidly and burn more intensely, making them harder to extinguish. Wildfires have a significant impact on air quality, by the wildfires releasing pollutants like particulate matter (PM), nitrogen oxides and ozone, Carbon dioxide and other pollutants that can combine with preexisting air pollution, increasing smoke's harmful effects on human health and the environment.



Map of air quality in Washington State. Higher numbers tend to fall in the Middle East and West of Washington. These are dangerous levels.

What effect does wildfire smoke have on health?

Exposure to smoke can both cause and worsen health problems. Symptoms include: Eye, nose, and throat irritation (burning eyes and runny nose).

Fatigue, Headache and coughing, Wheezing and shortness of breath, Aggravation of existing conditions, particularly heart and lung diseases, with symptoms like asthma attacks, chest pain, or irregular heartbeat, Mental health concerns and psychological stress.

Long periods of smoke can also impact mental health alongside physical health. Wildfire smoke can interrupt our daily routine, including limiting the amount of time that we spend outside and changing activities. Feelings of isolation from staying inside or sadness from lack of sunshine may occur.

Who is the most sensitive to smoke? Why?

Smoke from fires is not healthy for any person to intake/inhale. High or unusual levels of smoke can lead to lung issues, headaches, sore throats, and more. As the air quality rises into dangerous levels, certain groups are severely impacted. These sensitive groups may include:

- Those with ongoing respiratory and lung issues, such as asthma, COVID-19, bronchiolitis, or the flu.
- Those also affected include people with heart problems and people with a history of heart attack or strokes.
- If you are 18 or under, you are more exposed due to your lungs still developing, as well as a higher intake of air compared to adults.
- If you are 65 or above, you are also more at risk because you are more likely to have an underlying or hidden heart or lung disease.
- If you are pregnant-affects you and the fetus

In general, it is best to stay inside as much as you can when a wildfire incident happens.

How can I protect myself from the wildfire smoke?

- Be aware-Stay updated on the weather
- You can view the air quality index on the app, or you can watch the news
- Wear a mask
- Limit outdoor physical activity
- Keep indoors clean-close windows, don't smoke or light candles
- Driving-inside ventilation, close windows

Equity:

People of color and indigenous members are often discriminated against which causes them to have challenging life circumstances and more unhealthy living environments. On the map of air quality, the most dangerous levels fall on indigenous lands. Those with low income also experience an health inequity, as they have more exposure, can't afford healthcare, and other preventatives such as air filters.

What Can YOU Do?

Fire pits: Use clear of vegetation, never leave fires unattended, fully extinguish before leaving, and avoid on windy days.

Smoking: safely dispose of smoking materials and keep them out of reach of children.

Cars, tools, and other combustion engines: Never park cars on dry grass, and don't allow gasoline to spill on dry grass. Make sure tractors, off-road vehicles, and equipment being used in wooded areas, like chainsaws, have spark arrestors.

How to get involved: Be a good neighbor. Most wildfires are caused by humans, so do your part in prevention. Wildfires affect entire communities, so find local efforts and contain your vegetation.



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