

Understanding the Impact of Wildfire Smoke on Asthma, COPD, and Long-Term Lung Problems

California Fires May Lead to Long-Term Pulmonary Disease

By [Dr. Peter McCullough](#)

Global Research, January 14, 2025

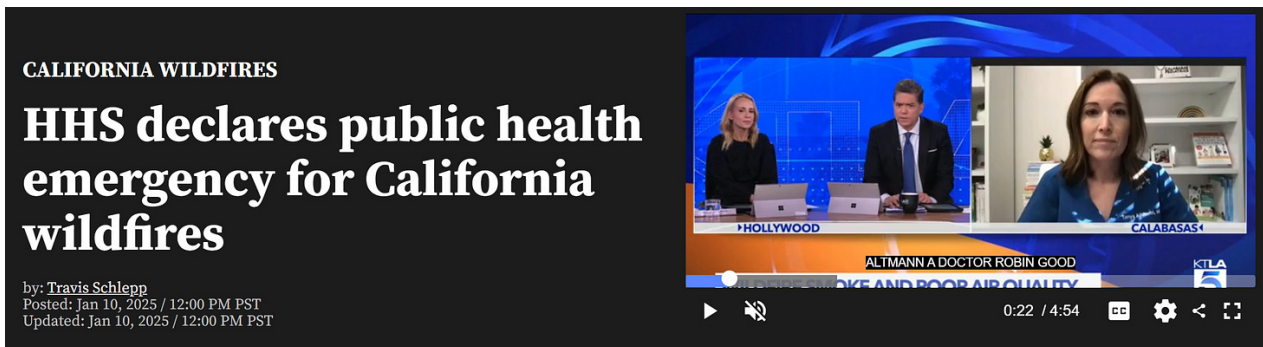
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The [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared a public health emergency for California](#) on Friday January 10, 2025 to address the health impacts of the devastating wildfires in Los Angeles County. The declaration provides greater flexibility for Medicare and Medicaid providers and suppliers, enabling them to address emergency health needs, officials said. There has been no report on burn victims or hospitalizations from smoke inhalation as of the time of this post.

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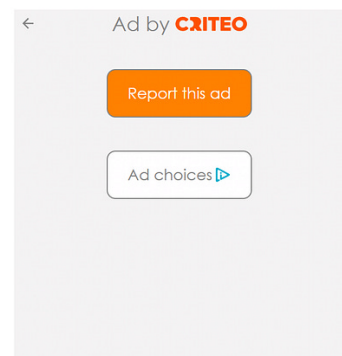


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HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra made the announcement, following President Biden's major disaster declaration.



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More than one [dozen people have died](#) as a result of the still-spreading wildfires burning in Los Angeles. In an update Saturday, officials with the County of Los Angeles Department of Medical Examiner confirmed five new deaths related to the Eaton Fire, [Nexstar's KTLA reports](#). In total, 11 deaths have been connected to the Eaton Fire while five others occurred as a result of the Palisades Fire, bringing the death toll to 16. Another 16 people —

12 from the Eaton Fire zone, four from the Palisades Fire Zone — have been reported missing. Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna said “dozens” more reports might have come in Sunday morning and investigators were reconciling whether some of the missing might be among the dead.

What are the long-term effects of intense smoke exposure and inhalation? One can imagine wood, plastics, and a wide range of materials are generating toxic smoke among a large population unprepared for this disaster.

[Wilgus and Merchant](#) summarized the literature on wildfire smoke exposures to pulmonary health. Below are the complications that can occur according to the evidence.



Review

Clearing the Air: Understanding the Impact of Wildfire Smoke on Asthma and COPD

May-Lin Wilgus * and Maryum Merchant

Citation: Wilgus, M.-L.; Merchant, M. Clearing the Air: Understanding the Impact of Wildfire Smoke on Asthma and COPD. *Healthcare* 2024, 12, 307. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare12030307>

Table 1. Epidemiologic evidence for adverse respiratory health effects associated with wildfire smoke exposure.

Adverse Respiratory Health Effects	Reference Number
Asthma hospitalization	[13,59,61–65]
Asthma emergency department visit	[13,25,26,59,61,62,66–70]
Asthma symptoms	[71–73]
Asthma incidence	[74]
COPD hospitalization	[13,61,63,64]
COPD emergency department visit	[13,26,75]
COPD symptoms	[76]
Long-term impact on lung function	[8,77,78]
Respiratory infection	[44,72,79–81]
Lung cancer incidence	[82]
Respiratory mortality	[58]

Wilgus ML, Merchant M. Clearing the Air: Understanding the Impact of Wildfire Smoke on Asthma and COPD. *Healthcare* (Basel). 2024 Jan 25;12(3):307. doi: 10.3390/healthcare12030307. PMID: 38338192; PMCID: PMC10855577.

Keep in mind a forest fire is far cleaner than an entire neighborhood of homes going up in flames. It appears that we can expect the fire disaster to impact the short-term pulmonary health of those with asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Longer term

concerns over pulmonary function and lung cancer should prompt surveillance and a low threshold to pursue the diagnosis depending on the clinical scenario.

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