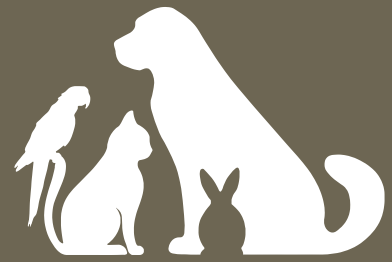


PET SAFETY FACT SHEET

RETURNING TO AREAS AFFECTED BY FIRES, SMOKE, AND ASH



Wildfires, smoke, and ash debris can pose health risks to both people and pets. The stress of a wildfire and sudden loss of the home environment can make pets fearful and anxious and change their behavior. Ash and harmful chemicals from a fire can be inhaled, ingested, or cause damage to the skin of pets. Below are safety guidelines to help protect your pets' health and safety during home fire recovery.

Home Fire Recovery and Safety:

Do not attempt to return to disaster-affected areas until cleared to do so by local authorities. Check for updates on public media or visit lacounty.gov/emergency.



- **Use caution when returning home:** Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) such as N95 masks or respirators, safety goggles, gloves, long sleeved shirts, long pants, shoes, and socks. Be aware of damage to power lines, gas lines, electrical breakers, and water systems. Additional details can be found in [Environmental Health's Fire Recovery Guidance](#).

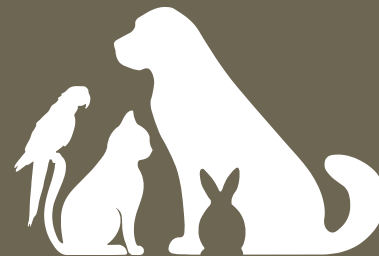


- **Before bringing your pets home:**
 - **Inspect for hazards:** Thoroughly inspect your property for broken glass, exposed nails, and other sharp objects as well as loose and weakened structures. Do not let pets wander through areas where buildings or fences have been damaged.
 - **Check for toxic materials:** Be cautious of hazardous chemicals, including those used in firefighting, burned materials, or soot that may still be present in your home. Even small amounts of these substances can harm your pet if licked, eaten, or inhaled.
 - **Remove smoke residue:** Follow [appropriate guidance](#) for cleaning up after a fire. Smoke residues, soot, and ash can cling to surfaces, so make sure your home is thoroughly cleaned before allowing pets to roam freely. Thoroughly clean floors, bedding, furniture, toys, and bowls for water and food before your pet uses them.
 - **Ventilate your home:** Open windows and doors if the air quality improves to allow your home to properly ventilate and clear out smoke particles. Be mindful of reintroducing smoke back into the home if air quality conditions worsen.
 - **Safe indoor spaces:** Provide pets with a designated safe, familiar space in the home that is free from ash and smoke particles. Crates or exercise pens are useful to keep pets in recently cleaned or designated safe areas.



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Air Quality and Smoke Exposure:

Smoke from wildfires can be very harmful to your pet's health, especially their lungs. Pet birds are especially sensitive to smoke and chemicals in the air.



- **Check for air quality updates** throughout the day at [AirNow.gov](https://www.airnow.gov). Adjust your activity level or amount of time spent outdoors with your pet based on the Air Quality Index (AQI).



- **Limit outdoor time:** Especially senior pets or those with an existing health condition like asthma or heart disease. Keep pets inside when air quality is poor (AQI above 100), and when visibility is low due to smoke.



- **Do not place an N95 respirator on your pet.** N95 respirators for people can be harmful if used on pets. Elastic straps can choke or strangle pets and the mask material can block their ability to breathe through their nose or pant.



- **Improve indoor air quality:** Use indoor air purifiers with [HEPA filters](#) and close windows. After removing smoke residue, keep air purifiers on to maintain a healthy air quality inside.

Ash and Debris Hazards:

Ash, materials used in firefighting, burned plastics, and other debris contain harmful chemicals that can be found on the ground or on surfaces where your pet eats, walks, or sleeps.



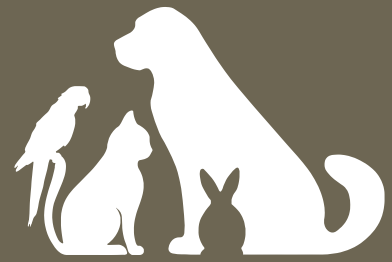
- **Prevent pets from ingesting chemicals:** Keep pets from eating or licking anything on the ground. Do not allow pets to drink from puddles or water bowls that have been left outside. Feed pets indoors and do not put food or treats directly on the ground, use a bowl that can be washed and cleaned after use.



- **Remove ash and debris from fur and paws:** Protecting fur and paws from ash and debris: Pets (especially dogs) may be trained to wear foot protection before going outdoors. Check paws regularly for any signs of injury, such as limping or licking of the paws. After walking outdoors, wipe your pet's paws and coat with a damp cloth. Consider bathing your pet more frequently based on their activity and exposures outside.



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Dehydration and Food Safety:



- **Provide fresh water:** Ensure that fresh, clean water is always available, as they may be under stress and need additional hydration. Follow the same guidelines for safe drinking water for people. Check with your municipal water supplier or city for updates regularly regarding water warnings.



- **Safe food storage:** Any food that has been exposed to smoke, heat or fire should be discarded. Refrigerated and frozen pet food should be discarded if the temperature rose above 40° Fahrenheit for two hours. Only provide fresh, safe food to your pets.

Monitor your pet's physical and behavioral health:



- **Monitor for physical distress:** Prolonged exposure to smoke can lead to coughing, wheezing, or labored and rapid breathing in pets. If your pet is sick, seek veterinary care immediately.



- **Monitor for behavioral changes:** Wildfires can cause behavioral changes in pets due to unfamiliar smells, sounds, and environments, leading to increased fear, agitation, or withdrawal. Monitor pets closely for signs of distress, provide familiar comforts, and seek veterinary advice if needed, while also taking care of your own mental health to help them adjust.

Additional Resources

- **American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA):**
<https://www.avma.org/resources/pet-owners/emergencycare/wildfire-smoke-and-animals>
- **Los Angeles County Department of Public Health:**
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Wildfire/>

