

# PRESS RELEASE



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## AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION WARNS OF HEALTH EFFECTS FROM SMOKE

HONOLULU – The American Lung Association in Hawaii warns visitors and people living near the lava flow in Puna to take precautions against smoke exposure from burning vegetation and low levels of sulfur dioxide.

This smoke is a mixture of gases and fine particles released as vegetation burns. In addition to burning your eyes, these fine particles and gases can be inhaled deeply into your lungs, making it harder to breathe. Exposure can worsen other chronic health conditions such as asthma or heart disease. Exposure to sulfur dioxide, a gas emitted by volcanoes, can also be harmful, burning the nose and throat and causing breathing difficulties.

Residents with respiratory problems such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and also those with chronic heart disease should take extra precautions during this time and call their physician immediately if problems develop.

“Even those without lung diseases may be at risk during this time,” said Kim Nguyen, Executive Director of the American Lung Association in Hawaii. “With exposure to smoke, there is an increased risk of dangerous health effects ranging from respiratory tract irritation to more serious illness, including reduced lung function, bronchitis, worsening of asthma, and premature death. This is especially true for children, older adults and outdoor workers.”

People living near affected areas are encouraged to do the following:

- Stay inside as much as possible, with doors and windows shut. Make sure only clean air circulates through air conditioners and/or air cleaners by using the recirculation setting.
- When driving through smoky areas, car windows and vents should be kept closed. Air conditioning should be set to “recirculate” to avoid exposure to unhealthy outside air.
- Avoid exercising outdoors, particularly if you smell smoke or experience eye or throat irritation.

Individuals with asthma are encouraged to contact their physician regarding any changes in medication they may need to cope with smoky conditions. The American Lung Association advises asthma patients who cannot reach their doctor to continue to take their medication and closely follow their [asthma action plan](#) as prescribed.

If you have questions, you can call the American Lung Association’s [Lung HelpLine](#) at 1-800-LUNG-USA (choose option #2) to speak to a lung health expert, or [submit a question online](#).

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### **About the American Lung Association in Hawaii**

The American Lung Association in Hawaii is a non-profit, voluntary public health organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease in Hawaii. Our programs focus on the areas of air quality, tobacco prevention and cessation and lung health.

For more information about the American Lung Association in Hawaii or to support the work it does, call (808) 537-5966 or visit [www.lung.org/hawaii](http://www.lung.org/hawaii).