

# Indoor Air Testing After a Wildfire

## Limitations of Testing Indoor Air

- Indoor air can be affected by outdoor air and many things you use at home, like personal care products, gas or wood burning appliances and household cleaners.
- Because there are so many sources of indoor air pollutants, it's not always possible to find out where the pollutants are coming from just by testing the air.
- It's better to take action to improve indoor air quality than to test air for pollutants.

## How to Improve Indoor Air Quality After a Wildfire

- Cleaning interior surfaces and household items is the best way to reduce the impacts of smoke and dust on indoor air quality. Information on how to clean buildings and facilities can be found online at [Reopening Buildings, Homes, and Businesses After a Wildfire](#).
- Get the air moving inside the building by opening windows when the outdoor air quality is good.
- If available, use air cleaners with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for changing the filter, where to place the device and the size of room it's meant to be used in. If you don't have an air cleaner, consider making a [DIY air cleaner](#).
- Consult a professional to clean, restore and restart any building heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems.
- Upgrade your furnace filter to the highest efficiency your ventilation system can handle.
- Check your furnace and air cleaner filters often. You may need to replace them more often than usual.

## Hiring a Contractor to Test Indoor Air

- If you decide to hire a contractor to test indoor air, you will need to explain your concerns so the contractor can target their air test.
- It is better to take indoor air samples after cleaning has taken place.
- Contractors that are registered or certified professionals or technicians (in fields such as engineering, chemistry, agronomy/environmental sciences, occupational or public health) are more likely to have training and experience relevant to the work they are performing.
- Contractors should:
  - Provide information about their accreditation, insurance, and references.
  - Be willing to answer questions about their testing methods and instruments. Methods will be different for different types of air pollutants (chemicals, mould, asbestos) and suspected sources.
  - Clearly explain the limitations of their proposed testing and how they will interpret the results. They should also provide the guidelines they will use to assess air quality.
  - Provide an estimated cost.

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- AHS Environmental Public Health is unable to review the air quality test results from an independent contractor because of the different methods and instruments available for use.
- If you suspect certified and registered professionals or technicians are operating outside of their skills or knowledge, you can report them to their respective organization.

*Adapted from Environment and Protected Areas. (n.d.). Environmental monitoring in Fort McMurray. Government of Alberta. <https://www.alberta.ca/environmental-monitoring-fort-mcmurray>*

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Contact us at 1-833-476-4743 or [submit a request online](#) at [ahs.ca/eph](https://ahs.ca/eph).

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