

Important Health Information for Bronx Residents Affected by the Fire on January 9, 2022

This fact sheet provides information on air quality, potential health effects, and safe cleanup for the residents of Twin Parks North West at 333 E. 181st St. and those who live nearby.

What is in smoke?

Smoke from a fire contains a mix of gases, particles and chemicals. People with certain health problems, like asthma or heart-related conditions, may experience health effects from breathing in smoke.

What health effects can occur during cleanup after a fire?

People often experience eye, nose and throat irritation. These symptoms do not usually require a visit to a doctor. In healthy people, these symptoms are usually short-term and unlikely to lead to bigger health problems.

See a doctor right away if you have more serious symptoms, such as shortness of breath or chest pain. If you have existing asthma, heart disease, chronic obstructive lung disease (COPD) or another medical condition, your symptoms may get worse, and you should seek medical attention.

Fires can also cause odors that can linger and enter nearby buildings. These odors may be a nuisance, but are not a health risk.

How can I reduce the smell of smoke in my home?

It can take several weeks for the smell of smoke to go away after a fire. During this time, it's important to clean thoroughly and air out your home as much as possible to improve indoor air quality.

- Use an air purifier if you have one.
- Open your windows one to two inches to air out any remaining smoke odors.
- Clean soft materials, like fabric-covered furniture, rugs and clothes, to get rid of the smell of smoke.
- Throw out any items that cannot be properly cleaned.

Can air purifiers reduce smoke residues in my home?

Air purifiers vary widely in their ability to remove air pollutants. Keep in mind:

- No air purifier can remove all pollutants from the air.
- The most common air purifiers are designed to remove only particles. These purifiers will not get rid of the odors caused by smoke.
- The use of ultraviolet (UV) light in air purifiers does not effectively help to remove smoke from the air.
- Some air purifiers release ozone gas, a known lung irritant and asthma trigger. These should **not** be used under any conditions.
- Always follow manufacturer recommendations for using air purifiers.

How do I get rid of dust, soot and debris?

When you move back into your home, take these steps to clean up any minor dust, soot or damage:

- Wear rubber gloves and an N95 disposable dust mask (or similar dust mask).
- If your home has water damage, remove, clean or throw away any items that have not dried out as soon as possible to prevent mold growth.
- Gently wet down debris and dusty surfaces with a soapy water solution in a spray bottle before removing dust/soot.
- Bag debris into regular garbage bags. Tie bags securely when you are done and throw them out along with regular garbage.
- If possible, use a vacuum with a HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filter to clean up dust.
- Wash your hands and face, especially before eating or drinking. After you finish cleaning, change shoes and clothes before entering clean areas of your home.

Is the food in my refrigerator safe to eat if my building lost power?

When frozen food thaws, and refrigerated food warms, bacteria and other organisms grow in food. This can cause serious health problems.

Throw away any food that may have spoiled (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy, mayonnaise or leftovers) if the food has been out of a cold refrigerator for four hours or more. **If in doubt, throw it out!** It is not worth getting sick.

How do I know if my tap water is safe to drink?

If you have been away from your home for one or more days, let the water run until it is cold and clear. This will replace the water that has been sitting in the pipes with fresh water.

Was the building checked for possible asbestos contamination?

The NYC Department of Environmental Protection assessed areas of the building that were impacted by fire and water and did not observe any damaged or deteriorated building materials that might contain asbestos.

Should I have the air in my home tested for smoke if there is a fire nearby?

In general, the public health risk for people in communities near a residential fire is low. You do not need to test the air in your home because the contaminants in the air would be at very low levels and do not last long.

Where can I get more information?

- If you have a problem with heat or hot water in your apartment, contact your building owner, manager or superintendent first. If the problem is not fixed in a timely way, call **311**, visit **nyc.gov/311**, or use the app 311Mobile to file a complaint. Hearing-impaired residents can register a complaint via a Touchtone Device for the Deaf (TDD) at 212-504-4115.
- For more information on air purifiers, visit **epa.gov** and search for **air cleaners**.
- For information on mold, visit **nyc.gov** and search for **mold**.
- For more information on air quality and health concerns with smoke, call **311**.

The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves. 1.12.22