Stay inside to avoid toxic LA wildfire smoke, residents warned

AFP – Health bosses warned people living in Los Angeles on Saturday to stay indoors because of dangerous wildfire smoke wreathing the area.
Monster blazes tearing through America's second largest city are pumping toxic clouds into the air, blanketing a vast region with choking fumes.

"We are all experiencing this wildfire smoke, which is a mix of small particles, gasses and water vapors," Anish Mahajan of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health told a press conference.

"It's those small particles that get into our noses and throats and cause those sore throats and headaches.

"Everyone in the areas where there's visible smoke or the smell of smoke, and even where you don't see that, we know that the air quality is poor, so you should limit outdoor exposure as much as possible."

Mahajan said even healthy individuals should stay inside as much as possible, using some kind of air filtration system.

People who have to work outside should wear an N95 mask, which filters out small particles to stop them entering the body.

But the young, the old and the sick should be especially careful at this time.

"Those who are at higher risk for bad health effects… children, the elderly, those with respiratory and heart conditions, and people with immunocompromised states, they may have worse symptoms like shortness of breath, wheezing, cough

and chest pain," he said.

Multiple fires that have erupted around Los Angeles have laid waste to vast areas, reducing homes, businesses, cars and vegetation to ash.

That means plastics, chemicals, fuel and building materials all went up in smoke, and now hang in the air across a densely populated region.

On Friday, Los Angeles County declared a public health emergency because of the smoke, and banned the use of machines like leaf blowers that can whip up dangerous ashes.

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