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# SAFETY ALERT

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No. 17-04

Operational Guidelines for Schools Impacted  
by Smoke and Ash

December 2017

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In the event of fires in Los Angeles County and surrounding areas, schools may be impacted by smoke and ash. The health and safety of our students and staff is our primary objective. LAUSD continuously monitors air quality information provided by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) and Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. Daily air quality and weather alerts are sent out to Principals and other administrative staff with the most recent updates.

Air quality may reach unhealthy levels at schools that are located in close proximity to the fire or within the direct path of the smoke. Air quality levels are measured and determined by the AQMD. People with respiratory or heart disease, pregnant women, older adults and children can be impacted more severely. Ensure that special attention is provided to individuals that have medical conditions or sensitivities, such as access to medications for individuals with asthma, allergies or other respiratory conditions.

Health effects related to the breathing of smoke may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Coughing
- Stinging eyes
- Difficulty breathing normally
- Scratchy throat
- Runny nose
- Wheezing and/or shortness of breath
- Headache
- Asthma attack
- Fatigue

Students or staff who experience severe symptoms such as shortness of breath, wheezing, chest pain, palpitations, nausea, or lightheadedness should consult with their health care provider immediately or go to an urgent or emergency care center.

Schools experiencing heavy smoke and ash are directed to "Shelter-in-Place." This means that all outdoor activities must cease. All students and staff are to stay indoors as much as possible. Doors and windows must remain closed. Students and staff may need to go outdoors to access restrooms and other facilities on a limited basis. Vigorous indoor activities that require exertion must be avoided by everyone.

The heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems should be run only if the air intakes can be closed. This allows the indoor air to be circulated and filtered. If the outside air intakes cannot be closed, then the HVAC must be turned off and the outside vents closed. If you need assistance with closing the outside air intakes, contact Maintenance and Operations at 213-745-1600.

Schools experiencing mild smoke and ash may institute a modified "shelter-in-place." This would include limiting outdoor activities that involve exertion such as athletics. Lunch and recess breaks should follow inclement weather schedules and locations. The HVAC system should remain on if the outside air intakes can be closed.

Ash accumulation and deposits should be cleaned up regularly. Visible accumulation of ash on classroom and office walls, shelving and fixtures may be removed with a damp cloth. Carpeted rooms should be vacuumed and other floors should be swept to collect accumulated ash debris, and then wet mopped. HVAC filters will need to be changed more frequently due to the increased ash and debris accumulation. Doormats placed outside building entrances will help to reduce the amount of ash tracked into buildings as well as regular cleaning of walkways and building entrances.

Ash on exterior areas of the campus may be removed with a water hose and spray nozzle. Personnel involved in the cleaning of the ash should wear a dust mask, eye protection and gloves. Heavy ash residue may be swept into piles, placed in plastic bags and disposed of in the refuse bin. (Bagging will help to minimize the generation of dusts as the material dries and is emptied from the refuse bin.) No special precautions are required for disposal, although large amounts of accumulated "wet ash" should be collected and disposed of, rather than washed into storm drains.