

Community FAQs for Menominee, Michigan and Marinette, Wisconsin Warehouse Fire

Is my health at risk from inhaling smoke from this fire?

- Based on current information, the concern with breathing smoke from the fire is inhalation of fine particulate material (PM). PM can affect the lungs and the heart. Exposure to PM at high enough levels can cause coughing, difficulty breathing, and can aggravate existing lung conditions like asthma. PM can also cause cardiovascular effects such as irregular heartbeat.
- Smoke contains many chemicals and particulates that can be irritating or harmful. Smoke can cause a range of health effects, from burning eyes and a runny nose, to aggravating chronic heart and lung diseases. The standards used to make decisions about air quality are designed to protect the most sensitive members of the population:
 - people with heart or lung disease (like asthma, COPD, or lung cancer)
 - older adults
 - children
 - pregnant women

While not everyone has the same sensitivity to smoke, it's still a good idea to avoid breathing smoke if you can help it. Talk to your doctor about any health concerns.

What chemicals are in the smoke?

- Response agencies are actively monitoring and sampling the air to determine the chemicals that may be present in the smoke. Based on current information, the main concern is the inhalation of fine particulate material (PM) in the smoke. In addition to particulate matter, agencies are monitoring for other compounds but there are no concerns identified with other compounds at this time. Recommendations may change as we learn more from air monitoring.

What actions should I take when outdoors where there is smoke?

- Avoid smoky areas when possible.
- Wear a face mask, which will protect you from breathing in fine particulate matter in the smoke. A cloth mask will not provide the same level of protection but is better than no mask.
- Shower regularly to remove dust, soot, and debris.

What if there is debris or ash on my property?

- Out of an abundance of caution, we recommend wearing gloves when handling debris or cleaning ash from surfaces.

- Wash hands regularly with soap and lukewarm water throughout the day when cleaning.
- Remove large pieces of debris from yards or properties using gloves or a shovel and place in a garbage container.
- If you need to clean debris or ash, wear a face mask to protect you from breathing in particulate matter.
- Don't spread soot around - try to avoid walking or driving on the material.
- When small amounts of soot and ash from a fire is deposited on your property, it can be washed away using typical cleaning methods, such as a garden hose.
- Gardeners should wash fruits and vegetables as they normally would to remove garden soil and dust. Root crops should be thoroughly washed and/or peeled to remove garden soil before eating.

How can we protect our family from exposure to ash or debris?

- Do not let children play with items covered by ash or debris.
- While outside, watch children carefully to prevent them from putting their hands in their mouths.
- When returning indoors, remove sooty clothes and shoes and wash hands thoroughly.
- Clean toys, swing sets, patio furniture, BBQs, pools and spas before use.

How do we protect our pets?

- If you're in a debris-impacted area, keep pets inside (cats, birds, etc.)
- If you're in a debris-impacted area, keep dogs on leash and do not let them drink from puddles or other impacted water-bodies.
- Do not let pets eat food that was outside during the fire or water from outdoor water bowls/troughs.
- If pets get ash on their paws or bodies, wash them off promptly using a pet shampoo labeled for that species.
- If pet toys were outside during the fire, wash them with Dawn brand dish soap before using them again, or discard soiled toys with household trash and replace.

How do I do clean-up inside and outside my home if necessary?

- If cleanup must be performed in high traffic outdoor areas, wash away all visible ash with a garden hose. Do not use leaf blowers or other methods that may cause ash or debris to become airborne.
- Hard surfaces (tile floors, countertops) can be wiped down with soapy water and rinsed. Uncovered kitchen items (pots, pans, flatware) should be washed with soapy water or run through the dishwasher.
- To clean swimming pools or spas, remove/skim debris, recirculate water through the filters, and perform routine pool maintenance (check pH levels, etc.).
- Individuals should remove visible large particle debris from yards using gloves or a shovel and place in a garbage container.
- Discard any food that may have been exposed and cannot be thoroughly washed prior to consumption. Empty and clean outside pet food and water bowls.

How do I protect myself if I have to clean surfaces?

- Wear protective clothing when cleaning surfaces that may contain soot that deposited from the fire. This includes gloves and, if available, a face mask to protect yourself from the inhalation of particles. A cloth mask will not provide the same level of protection as a face mask but is better than no mask.

What if surface water on my property is impacted?

- Remove any floating debris along the shore or bank using gloves or a skimmer and dispose of it in the trash.

How do I address potential impacts to my HVAC system?

- Clean or replace your HVAC filter to ensure that it is working efficiently and effectively. When removing or cleaning air filters, wear a mask and gloves. Turn on the system's "fan" or "recirculate" option to circulate the air in your home through the filter. If you have a window air conditioner, close the outdoor air damper.

Is drinking water at risk?

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), state agencies and local water utilities are working together to sample drinking water to confirm that there are no impacts to drinking water supplies and will share results as they become available. In addition, EPA is coordinating with the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to sample surface water and testing related to potential run-off from the incident site to the Menominee waste treatment plant and adjacent Menominee River, as surface water from Lake Michigan is the source of drinking water to the communities.

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If you have any additional concerns or questions, please call 211. If you live in Wisconsin, the direct number is: 877-947-2211. If you live in Michigan, the direct number is: (800) 338-1119.

***Please note: We will continue to update this document with additional questions and information as the response continues.**