

Bushfire Smoke Indoors – Family Checklist

Sealing, filtering and safe rooms for cleaner air at home (Australia)

Quick prep – before fire season

- Walk around the house and note where smoke and draughts get in (windows, doors, vents).
- Keep basic sealing supplies on hand (weather stripping, tape, silicone).
- Check smoke alarms are working and batteries are fresh.
- List anyone with asthma, heart or lung conditions in your home.

Seal the home against smoke

- Fit or replace weather seals on external doors and windows.
- Use door snakes/draft stoppers on the draughtiest doors.
- Seal obvious gaps around frames, skirting boards and vents where safe.
- Close unused wall/ceiling vents during smoke events (only if safe to do so).

Set up your safe room

- Choose an internal room with few windows and external doors.
- Check the door closes well and light/smoke gaps are small or sealable.
- Place a HEPA air purifier in the safe room (or plan where it will go).
- Store basic supplies here: water, snacks, medications, games/books.
- Add phone chargers, radio and a small torch or lantern.

Air conditioning & filtration

- Confirm your air conditioner can run on 'recirculate' (no outside air).
- Clean or replace filters before each fire season (aim for fine particle filters).
- Avoid evaporative cooling during smoke events (it pulls smoky air inside).
- Know how to turn off systems that draw in outside air quickly.

When smoke warnings appear

- Close all external windows, doors and vents straight away.
- Switch AC to 'recirculate' and turn off evaporative coolers.
- Move family into the safe room and start the HEPA purifier.
- Limit outdoor trips – wear a P2/N95 mask if you must go out.
- Follow official apps/websites/radio for health and fire updates.

During smoky conditions

- Keep windows/doors closed; avoid using exhaust fans that pull in smoke.
- Do not burn candles, incense or smoke indoors – keep air as clean as possible.
- Check on children, older people and anyone with breathing issues often.
- Keep everyone well hydrated and avoid heavy exercise indoors.
- Have a back-up plan if anyone's breathing worsens (GP, hospital, ambulance).

After the smoke clears

- Open windows and doors to air the house once outdoor air improves.
- Wipe surfaces and vacuum with a HEPA vacuum if available.
- Replace or clean AC and purifier filters exposed to heavy smoke.
- Note any damage or health issues and speak to your GP if symptoms persist.

Family, neighbours & key contacts

- Everyone in the household knows where the safe room is and how to use it.
- Share your plan with neighbours; check who may need extra help in smoky weather.
- Save local fire service, health advice line and council info in your phone.
- Write key numbers on a paper list and keep it in the safe room.

Tip from Kenno

Living in a bushfire-prone area myself, I've found that small, cheap steps make smoky days much less stressful. I keep a roll of