

# **BURN & SMOKE SAFETY GUIDE**

## **OVERVIEW:**

This resource is developed by members of [About Face: Veterans Against the War](#) who have knowledge of burn pits, chemicals, explosives, and their associated long term health impacts. During these nationwide uprising for justice we have noticed an alarming similarity between the contents of the debris that may incidentally be set on fire and the contents of the toxic burn pits that we and others were exposed to in the wars on Iraq and Afghanistan, which have been shown to cause lasting health complications. This is general safety information for anyone near fires or smoke during protests. We encourage anyone near any burning material to exercise extreme caution, use your judgement and act at your own risk. This is not a comprehensive guide or intended to serve as professional, medical, or legal advice.

***If you see the following materials burning, be aware that you may be subjected to higher levels of toxin exposure:***

- Lithium ion batteries
- Plastics
- Rubber
- Wood laminate
- Lyft bikes
- Rental scooters
- Oxygen tanks or vehicles/facilities that contain them
- Fuel tanks including propane, gasoline, generators
- Electrical materials
- Construction materials

## **WHAT WE WANT YOU TO KNOW**

THE INHALATION OF SMOKE OF ANY KIND IS INHERENTLY DANGEROUS AND SHOULD BE AVOIDED WHENEVER POSSIBLE, but certain materials are especially dangerous and more common than you may realize.

**LITHIUM ION BATTERIES:** These batteries are both very common and extremely dangerous when exposed to fire or extreme heat. The resulting fumes are extremely toxic, and THE BATTERY WILL EXPLODE, potentially causing injury to anyone standing close by. Lithium ion batteries are found in cell phones, cameras and most rechargeable devices. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE, THAT ELECTRIC SCOOTERS AND BIKES ALSO CONTAIN THESE BATTERIES AND ARE VERY COMMONLY FOUND IN AREAS WHERE DEMONSTRATIONS TAKE PLACE. Because these bikes and scooters are readily available, they may often be found in barricades or other uses prior to being set on fire. DO NOT STAND NEAR ANY ELECTIC SCOOTER OR BYCICLE THAT IS ON FIRE. The smoke is extremely toxic and it will explode.

**CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:** Construction sites are also common in protest areas and materials easily available there are likely to be used during a demonstration to aid demonstrators in protecting themselves. All rubbers, metals, woods, and plastics found on construction sites will emit hazardous fumes if set on fire. If a barrier made from construction materials is on fire, be aware that it is extremely harmful to breath. Please attempt to distance yourself as much as possible if you are near any of these objects on fire.

**MOTORIZED VEHICLES:** Demonstrators in streets often come into conflict with motorists. Folx gathered are not only in danger of being struck by a vehicle, but if a vehicle should be set on fire, it most likely contains all the materials previously

described as well dangerous accelerants like gasoline. Motorized vehicles are an inhalation hazard when on fire, and also have the potential to explode. PLEASE MAINTAIN MAXIMUM AVAILABLE DISTANCE FROM ANY VEHICLE ON FIRE.

**DUMPSTERS AND TRASH CANS:** You cannot know the contents of any of these bins and you should avoid them if possible. ASSUME THEY CONTAIN THE WORST. Once again, THE INHALATION OF SMOKE OF ANY KIND IS INHERENTLY DANGEROUS AND SHOULD BE AVOIDED.

## **PREPARATION & PREVENTATIVE MEASURES**

If you know that you are likely to be exposed to smoke of any kind, please wear the highest level of respiratory protection available to you.

Toxic fumes will also harm your eyes, please also bring the highest level of eye protection available to you.

IT IS CRUCIAL THAT ANY PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT YOU HAVE IS WORN PROPERLY AND CREATES A GOOD SEAL TO YOUR FACE.

### **First Aid Items to Bring If Possible:**

- Cold/Frozen squirt-top water bottle
- Sterile bandages or plastic bag
- Over the counter pain relievers

## **BURN FIRST AID**

*\*Much of this section adapted from Mayo Clinic guidelines*

1. **Put out burning substance** - in most cases, water or smothering the flame will work quickly.
2. **Remove restrictive** clothing/jewelry from the burn area (burns swell quickly) immediately.
3. **Cool** the burn with cool water or wet compress.
4. **Cleanse** the wound by using your squirt bottle to gently flush the debris out of the wound. Do not dig in the wound with fingers or other devices, do not apply any butter, creams, lotions or ointments!
5. **Protect** the wound loosely by covering the wound with sterile gauze bandages. If not available, a plastic bag can be used to protect from dirt and debris temporarily.
6. **Treat pain** with over-the-counter pain reliever such as acetaminophen (Panadol, Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, Nuprin), or naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn).
7. Upon arrival at home, you may choose to flush the wound again with an unscented, antibacterial soap and rebandage as directed above. Do not use scented products on skin around the wound while it heals.
8. Follow up with an appropriate resource or local medical hotline on signs and symptoms of whether you should seek further medical treatment for your burns.

## **SMOKE INHALATION FIRST AID**

*\*Much of this section adapted from Mayo Clinic guidelines*

1. **Get clear-** Move away from smoke to the freshest air available nearby. If the person is vomiting or coughing up phlegm help them sit. If they are unconscious lay them on their side so they don't choke on vomit.

2. **Assess-** if you or the individual has any of the following symptoms **get them to emergency medical care ASAP:**

- Is unconscious
- Is dizzy or confused
- Has chest pain or tightness
- Is coughing or choking violently
- Has wheezing, shortness of breath, or irregular breathing
- Has ash or smoke around mouth and nose
- Has burns inside mouth, throat, and nose
- Has swollen airways
- Has black or gray saliva
- Is nauseated or vomiting
- Is hoarse
- Has double or blurry vision
- Has numbness or tingling in their extremities

3. **Treat-** as needed and appropriate

- If there's minor throat irritation sometimes hard candy or cough drops can help.
- If the person is unconscious and not breathing, perform hands-only CPR ([how-to video](#)) while waiting for emergency medical aid.