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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER WARNS OF SMOKE FROM SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FIRES

San Bernardino – San Bernardino valley air quality is being affected by smoke from wildfires in Los Angeles and Riverside Counties. The South Coast Air Quality Management District forecasts unhealthy air quality for sensitive groups. Public Health Officer Maxwell Ohikhuare, M.D., advised that “infants, children, pregnant women, older adults, and people with lung or heart disease are at greater risk from smoke.”

Breathing smoke from outdoor fires can cause:

- Coughing, or scratchy throat
- Irritated sinuses
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Headaches
- Stinging eyes
- Runny nose
- Flare up of asthma symptoms

Smoke may worsen symptoms for people who have heart or lung disease, such as congestive heart failure, angina, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or asthma. Children are more likely to be affected by health threats from smoke because their airways are still developing, and they are more likely to be active outdoors.

Dr. Ohikhuare advises people to follow these steps to protect yourself and your family:

- Limit exposure to smoke outdoors and indoors.
- Stay inside and use your air conditioner. Check for a "recirculation" function on your air conditioner. If smoke is present, it will be easier to breathe indoors if air is recirculating instead of drawing smoky air from outdoors.
- If you do not have an air conditioner or smoke is likely to get inside your house, leave the area until the smoke is completely gone.

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- Avoid activities that put extra demands on your lungs and heart. These include exercising or physical chores, both outdoors and indoors.
- Make sure you take all your medications according to the doctor's directions. Dust masks, bandanas, or other cloths (even if wet) will not protect you from smoke.

Contact your doctor if you have symptoms such as chest pain, chest tightness, shortness of breath, or severe fatigue. This is important for not only people with chronic lung or heart disease, but also for individuals who have not been previously diagnosed with such illnesses. Smoke can "unmask" or produce symptoms of such diseases.

For more information visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/wildfires/> .

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