

CLEAN AIR – I CARE

Washington Farmworker Families Coping with the Stress of Wildfires



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Advancement of
Family Education**



**Pacific Northwest
Agricultural
Safety and Health
Center**

Project Overview

- **Overall Goal:**
 - Describe the impact on farmworker parents of balancing childcare with both work and concerns about their children's health related specifically to wildfire smoke exposure.
 - To propose potential solutions to mitigate the stress of worrying about children's exposure through safe and attainable childcare.
- **20 interviews with farmworker parents**
 - 10 in Chelan County
 - 10 in Okanogan County
- **Two town halls organized around interview results**



Interviews

- **PART ONE:** Identify family dynamics, job responsibilities and understand the current child care situation for each family.
- **PART TWO:** Identify knowledge on the health impacts of wildfire smoke, present concerns about children's health and describe how this impacts parents in the workplace.

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Photos by Idanis Cruz and Sarah Fish

Has wildfire smoke impacted your family? Share your story!

Our Study

We invite you to participate in an interview to come share your thoughts on what is needed to help agricultural families. Your participation will help create policy change to improve air quality in your community and reduce your child's exposure to wildfire smoke.

Wenatchee CAFÉ and the Pacific Northwest Agricultural Safety and Health (PNASH) Center are partnering on a study to learn about the pressure wildfire season has placed on families who balance childcare, work, and concerns about children's exposure to smoke.

Participation

Participation means completing a 60 minute interview. Your participation will help expand our understanding of issues agricultural communities face.

After the Interview, participants:

- receive \$50 giftcard and health & safety information on wildfire smoke

Requirements to participate:

- Must currently or previously worked in agriculture
- Have a child under the age of 12

Contact

For more information and to participate contact:

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Visit our website
to learn more



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Townhalls

- Project overview & introductions
- Interview Results shared
- Panel of farmworker parents
 - *Can you share a story about how you have been impacted by smoke?*
 - *What resources do you wish you would have had during these moments?*
- What do you hope to get from and give this group or community?
- Round table discussions



Theme 1: There is a need for more resources to prepare farmworkers and their homes for smoke events



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“I am also aware that the windows in my house are not airtight. In other words, I would prefer to get new windows, seal everything so that they would be well protected in here; but as I say, one is not enough to do everything. I have told my husband that I would like to change the windows, that they be more resistant to all that [smoke]. But as you know, the situation is difficult, we don't have the resources.”

*“I'm thinking. I keep thinking about the impact that fires have on communities. And how we are we -- we're **not**, sorry, prepared enough for these fires.”*



Theme 2: There is a
need for more
resources to prepare
worksites for smoke
events

Theme 2: There is a need for more resources to prepare worksites for smoke events

"I believe that there should be specifications, or they should force employers to provide [resources]. Last year they provided masks because of COVID, but they didn't give them to everyone. Almost everyone had to bring their own mask because of COVID. But in terms of smoke, I have not seen them say: "I am going to provide you with the mask so that you can use it during this period."

"I would like them to teach us, like through workshop, or somehow share information in the community. Like when the smoke and fire season is coming, what measures could we take? More information, because the truth is they don't tell us anything."

Theme 3: The
worksite response to
smoke is
unpredictable



Theme 3: The worksite response to smoke is unpredictable

“It’s interesting, because when it’s very, very, very hot, they do stop the harvest or they stop the activity, because they say: “It’s too much – it’s too hot” Or when it’s very cold, they also stop work just like when it is hot. And they follow those rules. But when it comes to fires, which goes directly to the lung and damages it - it can affect your performance if you don’t breathe well - I haven’t seen them stop the activity.”

“Sometimes we work when the smoke is very thick and strong. And yes, sometimes they provide masks and sometimes they don’t.”



Theme 4: There is a need
for more accessible
summer childcare
programs

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“[when you’re working] You cannot always be aware of your children’s health. You do not know what is happening with them or where they are. Whether you have left them at daycare or in your own home... Sometimes I leave them in the care of their brother, who perhaps doesn't know what to do either [during a smoke event].”

“Yes, it has been stressful. Finding a person that I think is the right one to take care of my children.”

"I think a lot of parents here in the area would love to have a more reliable option, an option they can count on and say, 'This is my childcare, it's not going to let me down, unless my kids get sick, and I have to stay home with them. Yes, we need it, it would be important for many of these families to have that support.”

Theme 5: There is a need to find ways to help families cope with the stress of smoke events



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“Already it has been more than 15 days, being with a smoke, not only do the children start to get stressed, or your children get stressed, but you start to get stressed too, because, maybe like me, for example, if there is a lot of smoke, I try not to go out into the street, not to be in the patio, because it affects me.”

“My first option was always to leave them home and let my daughter take care of my two other children, although the other one is older and has autism. But I am always be on the lookout, calling: “How are you?”. Texting them: “Everything okay?”

“They are used to playing outside in the summer, most of the time, outside, being free. And when it's burning, obviously I don't let them out and they feel bored and stressed at times.”



Theme 6: There is a need
for smoke safety related
information for farmworker
parents

Theme 6: There is a need for smoke safety related information for farmworker parents

“Well, look, it's like I told you, when you go outside you breathe all that. Imagine, it's like pure smog, bad for your health. And besides, I'm going to speak for myself, my house is like this - do you think that the smoke doesn't go inside? All of that we are inhaling. And every year there are fires, and well, more damage is being done to us for asthma, for coughs.”

“I have felt that, when there are fires and there is smoke like this throughout the city, well, I do feel that my head hurts, my throat feels dry, my nose burns. I feel these symptoms, but I don't know to what extent your body can harm you. The only thing I know is that it damages your lungs, right? Because it's smoke, but from then on, the truth is I don't have much knowledge of what else all that can cause you.”

Additional Town Hall Takeaways

- Farmworkers really appreciated the in-person platform to share and discuss these topics
- Evacuation notices and smoke information is not widely shared among farmworkers in this region
- In the moment, emergency notifications on air quality need to be improved
- Information gained (themes) can be shared with resource organizations to improve how they provide for their community



Collaborate with communities in north-central Washington to create a **framework for strengthening community engagement as well as the access to and content of climate and smoke-related communications and messaging** in Chelan, Okanogan, Grant and Douglas counties to protect and prepare at-risk populations.

Thank you!




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Questions?

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