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Protect your employees and your facility from air pollution

Simple steps to save money and keep employees safe this season.

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By Jim Thoma

As the summer heats up, so do wildfires and the smoke they carry. This year [Canadian wildfires](#) have sent dangerous levels of smoke up and down the East Coast and throughout the American Midwest, polluting air

High pollution and wildfire smoke can cause [numerous health issues](#) for workers and visitors in your facility, even triggering deadly outcomes like asthma attacks, heart attacks, strokes, and more. It's important to keep your HVAC systems up and running during the hot summer months, but it's equally important to ensure they are clean and not spreading harmful pollutants. Without proper maintenance and cleaning, here are just a few of the biggest risks and issues that could arise:

- **Health issues from poor air quality:** The biggest concern is for the people in your facility. If harmful pollutants like smoke and other particulates are not filtered out properly, allergies, irritation, asthma, and heart conditions can all be a concern.
- **Increased energy use:** Your systems will have to work harder without regular cleaning to maintain the same level of comfort. This can skyrocket your bill and put extra stress on your equipment.
- **System failures:** Additional dirt and debris can build up on coils, causing extra strain on the HVAC motor. Left alone long enough, not only could your system be less efficient, but it could also cause a system failure, resulting in a surprise, pricey replacement.
- **Mould:** Dirt and pollution can carry mould and other microbial growth. When moisture is present, this can cause spores to spread, and dangerous moulds can grow. Foul odours can also be an issue when HVAC systems aren't properly maintained.

There are several steps you can take to minimize the risk of these occurrences:

Monitor air quality

No matter where your facility is located, it's important to monitor the air quality for high particulate matter. This can be an indicator of potential maintenance you'll need to do on your HVAC system to keep it running smoothly. Over time, dust, allergens, soot, and other irritants can accumulate in air ducts. When the air quality is poor, especially from wildfire smoke, these harmful particles can cause allergies and respiratory issues. Keep on top of your area's air quality to ensure you're cleaning air ducts as needed.

Clean air ducts regularly

The National Air Duct Cleaners Association recommends air ducts need to be inspected annually, and cleaned as needed, but if you [smell wildfire smoke](#), they suggest getting your air ducts cleaned by a professional quickly. Smoke and soot can infiltrate even the best HVAC systems through windows and doors. The smoke damage can be the same as if the fire was inside the facility. Everyday pollutants and allergens can also make their way into your HVAC system and cause issues for those inside.

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..... property has good airflow and ventilation, pollution is diluted. Keeping windows and doors closed and sealed properly can also help reduce the spread of contaminants in the inside air.

Conduct regular maintenance

It's a good idea to have HVAC and ventilation systems maintained often and regularly inspected to ensure they are working properly. Switch out filters at least quarterly or more often as needed; they are your first line of defense to trap dangerous particles.

The benefits of focusing on indoor air quality

By maintaining your systems, you not only help improve the health of those in your facility, but you can also improve the efficiency of your business. A 2021 [study](#) by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health showed the air quality within an office can have a major impact on workers' productivity, focus, and cognitive function. No matter what type of facility you manage, improving the air quality in your space has both health and economic benefits. Here are just a few benefits you might see, especially during peak HVAC season and wildfire season:

- Improved health and quality for employees
- Better temperature control
- Lower energy use and cost
- Improved life of your HVAC system

In addition to helping remove smoke, soot, and pollution, regular maintenance can decrease the chances of dangerous moulds and mildews spreading through your building.

Wildfire smoke and poor air quality can dramatically affect your business. Adding indoor services and HVAC cleaning and maintenance to your maintenance plan can help proactively minimize the financial and health impacts of poor air quality for your business.

Jim Thoma is the VP of Operations for [AdvantaClean](#), the nation's leading franchise specializing in mold remediation and indoor air quality services.