



Seattle's pilot program will outfit five, centrally-located public buildings with high-tech filtration systems | Photo source Pixabay

SEATTLE INSTALLING PUBLIC CLEAN-AIR SHELTERS

 HEALTHCARE & WELLBEING

As the climate warms up, the city of Seattle is searching for a way to protect its residents from increasing wildfire smoke

Spotted: Seattle, Washington, is instituting a new program to install air-filtration systems in public sites around the city. The sites will become “clean-air shelters” during times of high pollution for those considered high-risk, such as seniors and asthmatics. These individuals will be able to move indoors, into highly-filtered air.

Over the past couple of years, Seattle has spent much of its summers blanketed in smoke blown in from British Columbia and Eastern Washington wildfires. The increased levels of air pollution lasted for weeks, and on many days the air was judged to be “unhealthy for all.”

The buildings in Seattle were built for a cooler, wetter climate. Few residents have air-conditioning in their homes, which means they need to open windows to cool down – letting in smoke-filled air.

The pilot program will outfit five, centrally-located public buildings with high-tech filtration systems to screen out smoke and toxins. The sites chosen all have air-conditioning and are popular spots for locals. They are also located in areas with a concentration of residents who can't afford filtration systems for their own homes. The buildings will use sensors to monitor how clean the air is, and air doors will be installed at entrances to push smoke-filled air away.

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Takeaway:

As the climate warms, cities like Seattle may be looking at a new normal, and one which has significant health consequences. But clean-air shelters will likely not be enough on their own. A number of studies have demonstrated that as it gets warmer, the likelihood of uncontrollable fires will increase, meaning more smoke. Given this, the city is already looking at the possibility of expanding the program to other buildings. In the future, residents and cities may need to consider wearing [anti-pollution masks](#) or building [large-scale air purifiers](#).