



Wildfire Smoke Protection Program Training

This training only applies to environments where the Air Quality Index – AQI is greater than 150 due to Wildfire Smoke

Hazards of Wildfire Smoke

- There may be many hazardous chemicals in wildfire smoke, but the main harmful pollutant for people not close to the fire is “particulate matter”
- These are tiny particles suspended in the air
- Particulate matter can irritate the lungs and cause coughing, wheezing, or difficulty breathing
- It can also reduce lung function, worsen asthma, and other serious symptoms
- People over 65 with heart and lungs problems are most likely to suffer more serious health effects

PM 2.5

- The smallest and usually the most harmful particulate matter in wildfire smoke is called PM 2.5
- The name comes from the particle diameter of 2.5 micrometers or smaller

Right to Obtain Medical Treatment

- Employees who show signs of illness due to wildfire smoke exposure have the right to seek medical treatment without the fear of punishment
- The normal workers' compensation claim process is how the department will ensure this right
- If a serious injury or illness occurs due to wildfire exposure, emergency procedures will be activated (contacting 911)

Air Quality Index - AQI

- When the air quality is expected to be at an unhealthy level, the department will develop a method of finding the current AQI for PM2.5 where employees are expected to be working outdoors
- The recommended AQI site is AirNow.gov.
- Once at the AirNow site, enter the zip code or city name to see the current AQI for that area. The site is updated hourly
- Other optional sites are
 - US Forest Service at <https://tools.airfire.org>
 - San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control – <https://www.valleyair.org>

AQI over 150 for PM2.5

- Respirators are an effective way to protect employees health by reducing exposure to wildfire smoke
- When the AQI is above 150, N95 particle respirators will be provided to staff for **VOLUNTARY USE**.
- When the AQI is greater than 500, respirator use will be **REQUIRED**
- Surgical masks, scarves, bandanas, gators, or T-shirts will not provide protection against particles found in wildfire smoke
- An N95 respirator provides the minimum level of protection for wildfire smoke

Respirators – N95



- Read the manufacture’s instructions on the care, maintenance and cleaning of the respirator
- Understand the respirator’s limitations
- During VOLUNTARY USE, shaving of facial hair and a medical evaluation are not required for use of the respirator
- Do not wear the respirator in areas where air contaminants for which the respirator is not designed to provide protection.
- A respirator designed to filter particles will not protect against gases or vapors

Respirators – N95



- Employees should keep track of their own respirator so they do not mistakenly use someone else's
- Employees who have a heart or lung medical condition should consult with their doctor before using a respirator

Communication

- The department will alert employees when the air quality is harmful and expected to be greater than an AQI of 150
- Supervisors and managers should encourage employees to inform them if they notice the air quality is getting worse or if they are suffering any symptoms due to poor air quality
- The department will communicate the AQI via:
 - Daily tailgate meetings
 - Text messages, radio, telephone, or emails

Administrative Controls



- The department shall protect employees from PM2.5 with administrative controls if possible by:
 - Locating work in enclosed structures or vehicles
 - Changing work locations with lower AQI's
 - Reducing work time in areas with unfiltered air
 - Increasing rest time and frequency and providing areas with filtered air
 - Ensure employees know the importance and limitations of using a respirator when exposed to wildfire smoke