

Wildfire Smoke Policy

What is this?

Cal/OSHA has issued an emergency regulation that requires employers with exposed outdoor workplaces to protect employees from the potential harm caused by wildfire smoke. In compliance with Section 5141.1 the following must be achieved.

Train all employees in the following:

Health effects

- The main harmful pollutant for people who are not very close to the fire is “particulate matter.”
- Particulate matter can irritate the lungs and cause persistent coughing, wheezing or difficulty breathing.
- The smallest particulate matter is called **PM2.5** because it has a diameter of 2.5 micrometers or smaller.

How to obtain current Air Quality Index (AQI) for PM2.5

- Various government agencies monitor the air at locations throughout California and report the AQI.
- www.AirNow.gov is recommended.
- AQI is also available from the U.S. Forest Service at <https://tools.airfire.org/> or www.arb.ca.gov/capcoa/dismap.html.
- The EPA website, www.enviroflash.info, can transmit daily and forecasted AQI’s by text or email.

What are we required to do?

- Check the current AQI before and periodically during each shift.
- Employers shall alert employees when the air quality is harmful, and employees shall inform their employers if they notice the air quality is getting worse or they are experiencing negative health effects. All employees have the right to medical treatment without fear of reprisal. Employees may consult their CVIS Reps as needed.
- If the AQI is 151 or greater, employers shall provide their workers with an N95 dust Mask for **voluntary** use.
- If the AQI is greater than 500, air purifying half-face respirator use is required.

What are the levels?

- AQI of 0 – 50 is Good
- AQI of 51 – 100 is Moderate
- AQI of 101 – 150 is Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups
- AQI of 151 – 200 is Unhealthy
- AQI of 201 – 300 is Very Unhealthy
- AQI of 301 – 500 is hazardous

What PPE is required when the AQI is 151 or greater?

- When the AQI is 151 - 499 employees shall be offered the voluntary use of an **N95 Dust Mask**. **Fit testing is not required. Dust masks shall be changed out no less than daily.**
- When the AQI is 500 and above, all employees working outdoors **shall use a half-face air purifying respirator with P100 filter cartridge. Fit testing and medical qualification and training is required.**
 - It is strongly recommended to cease all outdoor work when the AQI is 500 and above.



Steps to take to protect yourself:

- Locate work in enclosed structures or vehicles where the air is filtered.
- Changing procedures such as moving to a place with a lower current AQI for PM2.5.
- Reducing work time in areas with unfiltered air.
- Increasing rest time and frequency and providing a rest area with filtered air.
- Reducing the physical intensity of the work to help lower the breathing and heart rates.