

NBSIA Member Services Safety Bulletin

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WILDFIRE SMOKE

Protect workers from unhealthy air due to wildfire smoke. When workers might be exposed to unhealthy air from wildfires, California's protection from wildfire smoke standard requires employers to take steps such as changing the location of work operations, modifying work schedules or providing proper respiratory protection like N95 respirators.



Smoke from these wildfires contains chemicals, gases and fine particles that can harm health. One of the most harmful hazards comes from breathing fine particles in the air (called PM2.5), which can reduce lung function, worsen asthma or other existing heart and lung conditions, and cause coughing, wheezing and difficulty breathing.

When wildfire smoke affects a worksite, **employers must** check the air quality index (AQI) for PM2.5 and throughout the work shift as needed to protect employees. Employers can monitor the AQI with their own devices or use websites like the U.S. EPA AirNow website or local air quality management district websites. If the AQI for PM2.5 is 151 or greater, **employers must** take the following steps to protect employees:

- Communication – Inform employees of the AQI for PM2.5 and the protective measures available to them
- Training and Instruction – Provide effective training and instruction to all employees on the information contained in section 5141.1 [Appendix B](#)
- Modifications – Implement modifications to the workplace to reduce exposure. Examples - provide enclosed structures or vehicles for employees to work in, where the air is filtered
- Changes – Implement changes to work procedures or schedules. Examples - change the location where employees work or reduce the time they work outdoors or are exposed to unfiltered outdoor air.
- Respiratory protection – Provide proper respiratory protection equipment, such as disposable respirators, for voluntary use.

To filter out fine particles, **respirators must be labeled N-95, N-99, N-100, R-95, P-95, P-99, or P-100, and must be labeled as approved by the US National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).**

If employers move operations indoors, they must follow Cal/OSHA's COVID-19 Prevention Emergency Temporary Standards.

For more resources, visit nbsia.org/Wildfire

Sources:

https://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/5141_1.html

<https://www.dir.ca.gov/DIRNews/2021/2021-74.html>



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