

WILDFIRE SAFETY WHILE AT WORK

Wildfire smoke is a seasonal occupational hazard for many workers. Workers can be exposed to unhealthy conditions while at work if wildfires are burning close to the work areas.

This information is not intended for firefighters, it is intended for workers in other environments who may be exposed to wildfire smoke.

WILDFIRE SAFETY:

- SMOKE INHALATION DANGERS
- AIR QUALITY
- WORKING OUTSIDE
- WORKING INDOORS
- WORKING IN VEHICLES
- WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



BC Forest Safety

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WILDFIRE SAFETY - WHILE AT WORK



SMOKE INHALATION DANGERS

Breathing in smoke from wildfires can cause eye, nose, and throat irritation, as well as headaches. It can also cause allergies to get worse. In addition, workers need to be aware of other health issues related to wildfires, such as heat stress or exhaustion.

HOW BAD IS THE AIR?

The BC government produces an Air Quality Health Index that can be accessed at this website address:

- [Air Quality Health Index - BC Air Quality - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](http://gov.bc.ca)

The index is rated from low to very high risk as shown by the table below.

Different regions of the Province are listed, according to where air monitoring stations are located.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	+
Low Risk (1-3)			Moderate Risk (4-6)			High Risk (7-10)			Very High Risk	

WORKING OUTSIDE

Workers who work outside are particularly affected by wildfire smoke, as physical exertion can increase air intake up to 20 times. Employers can reschedule outdoor work, relocate the work until the air quality improves, and monitor the air quality.

WORKING INDOORS

Air quality inside can be just as harmful to workers. Ensure the building's HVAC system is working properly, and check the filters to make sure they are clean and installed correctly. If possible, replace the filters with higher efficiency filters.

WORKING IN VEHICLES

When working in vehicles (i.e., log trucks), keep the vents and windows closed, and operate the air conditioning in "recirculate" mode. When you are in areas with good air quality, open the windows occasionally to prevent carbon dioxide buildup. Workers may also be exposed to heat stress – drink plenty of water. There may also be reduced visibility – ensure you drive with the lights on, and have conducted your circle check.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- When wildfire smoke is in your work area or community, regularly check for air quality updates on local media (T.V., radio, or on-line).
- Wildfire smoke is a mixture of gases, particles, and water vapour. Fine particulate matter is the main public health concern with wildfire smoke. Personal protective equipment like respirators (such as N95, KN95 or P100) may be used to reduce exposure to wildfire smoke.
- Masks are not substitutes for respirators. Surgical type masks do not form a tight seal with the face and are not designed to filter the fine particulates or gases and vapours in smoke.

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