

Wildfire Smoke Safe Work Procedures



Smoke from wildfires are a perennial risk for workers in all parts of Canada, particularly during the summer and dry seasons. The danger is especially great to those who engage in physically strenuous work outdoors. Here's a Safe Work Procedure that you can adapt outlining special safety precautions to take if and when smoke from wildfires descend on your own workplace. Go to the OHS Insider website for a complete Wildfire Smoke Safety and Compliance Game Plan.

Safe Work Procedures for Working in Smoky Conditions

Authorized Personnel: *The following designated person[s] (Program Administrator Safety Coordinator/Supervisor/Foreman/Field Supervisor/Crew Leader) have authority and responsibility for implementing the provisions of this procedure at the workplace*

Name/Title/Phone Number

POLICY

Smoke from wildfires is a seasonal hazard, particularly during the summer and in dry conditions. Dangers may exist even if the wildfires that emitted the smoke are thousands of kilometers away in another province or even another country.

The hazard is particularly great for work performed outdoors. Accordingly, the following safety measures must be taken when outdoor work is to be performed in locations where the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) is 6 or above.

1. A competent person will monitor the hourly AQHI for as long as the work is performed until such time that the AQHI falls to 3 or lower.
2. The workday will be cut short or rescheduled for night or hours during the day when the AQHI decreases.
3. Before work begins, tailgate meetings will be held to review the ABC Company smoke and heat illness prevention procedures, the AQHI and weather forecast and emergency response procedures.
4. If schedule modifications aren't possible, workers will be provided additional water and rest breaks and observed closely for signs and symptoms of smoke and heat illness.
5. Workers will be furnished and must wear N-95 particulate filtering facepiece respirators.
6. Each worker will be assigned a "buddy," or experienced co-worker, to be on the lookout for signs and symptoms of smoke or heat illness and ensure that emergency procedures are initiated when possible signs or symptoms are displayed.

The following additional preventive measures will be taken when the AQHI reaches 8 or above

1. Workers will not be assigned to outdoor work if they are pregnant or have cardiovascular, lung, asthmatic, or other health conditions or vulnerabilities putting them at increased danger of smoke illness unless they use elastometric respirators fitted with a combination of organic vapour cartridge/P100 filter, or other form of respiratory protective equipment that has been properly fit tested and verified as meeting NIOSH or other required standards.

2. Effective communication by voice, observation, or electronic means will be maintained so that workers at the worksite can contact a supervisor when necessary.
3. If the supervisor is unable to be near the workers to observe or communicate with them, a cell phone, text messaging or other electronic device may be used for the purpose stated in Section D of the Procedure above as long as reception in the area is reliable.
4. Frequent communication will be maintained with workers working by themselves or in smaller groups via phone or two-way radio to monitor for possible symptoms of smoke or heat illness.
5. Workers will be observed for alertness and signs and symptoms of smoke or heat illness by the supervisor or, when the supervisor isn't available, an alternate responsible person who's been trained in and knowledgeable of what steps to take if smoke or heat illness occurs.
6. Workers will be reminded throughout the work shift to drink plenty of water.