

# Prepare your business for wildfire season

## Prepare for emergencies:

- Determine location of Cleaner Air Shelters. (These may be in large commercial buildings, schools, shopping malls, or other facilities with effective air conditioning and filtration.)
- Plan for how to get employees to safer locations or when to release employees safely before situations worsen.
- Designate essential personnel and duties.
- Create an emergency communication plan. <https://www.ready.gov/business/implementation/crisis>
- Set aside adequate supplies of water, food, personal protective equipment, and communication methods (devices).



Wildfires are getting bigger, lasting longer, and happening more often in Oregon and across the western United States. In addition to immediate harm from the fire itself, hazardous smoke travels well beyond the fire lines, putting people and businesses at risk.

Learn how you and your employees can be better prepared.

## How does wildfire smoke impact health?

Smoke from wildfires may contain chemicals, gases, and fine particles. The greatest health hazard comes from breathing these particles, which can reduce lung function; worsen asthma and other existing heart and lung conditions; and cause coughing, wheezing, and difficulty breathing. Carbon monoxide also may be present in high concentrations, especially when fires are smoldering.

## Who's at risk?

Exposure depends on many factors, including proximity to wildlands; resources to fight and

mitigate fires; and environmental conditions including wind, humidity, and precipitation. People who work outdoors, have respiratory conditions or cardiovascular disease, smoke, or are pregnant have a higher risk of health impacts.

## What can employers do?

### Before wildfire season:

- Include wildfire smoke events in your emergency response and business continuity plans. Designate a team for handling business and personnel impacts. Include members with authority to close business or stop work.
- Prepare production schedules and work assignments with potential business interruptions in mind, especially if you are in a high-impact area.
- Identify the risk of smoke exposure for each type of employee and task, including outdoor and indoor workers, and those who travel or provide transportation. Describe levels

of increasing hazard and response for each work situation. Include necessary supplies for different responses, such as personal protective equipment, flashlights, cell phones, and radio communication.

- Identify resources for monitoring wildfires and air quality in your area. Train your team on how to use these resources and respond to quickly changing environmental conditions. One resource is Oregon Department of Environmental Quality's Air Quality Index: <https://www.oregon.gov/deq/aq/pages/aqi.aspx>

#### During a wildfire smoke event:

##### Indoors:

- Shut down outside air intakes and allow air-conditioned buildings to operate on recirculated air. Change filters on HVAC units.
- Keep windows and doors closed; minimize entry and exit.

##### Outdoors:

- Relocate or re-assign work activities out of the smoke zone.
- Cease work when air quality and/or visibility presents health and safety hazards, including carbon monoxide, heavy smoke, low visibility, or other highly hazardous conditions.

##### All:

- Communicate frequently with employees and customers.
- Monitor communication channels, such as public service announcements and websites, including the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Health Authority, and others. Be alert to quickly changing conditions.
- Consider providing filtering facepiece masks for voluntary use by employees. (Provide Appendix D of 1910.134, Oregon OSHA Respiratory Protection standard, before use <https://osha.oregon.gov/OSHArules/div2/div21.pdf>.) Remember, outdoor environments may present exposures to hazards not addressed by regular N-95 or N-100 masks; any voluntary respiratory protection would be for temporary, short-duration use.
- Reduce or eliminate other sources of air pollutants, such as vacuuming or cooking (indoors) and smoking or burning fuel (outdoors).

#### After a wildfire smoke event:

Discuss lessons learned; make any necessary changes to your plan and processes.

#### Where to get more information

##### AirNow.gov – Air Quality Index

<https://www.airnow.gov/index.cfm?action=pubs.aqiforecast>

##### Oregon Smoke Information

<http://oregonsmoke.blogspot.com/>

##### Protecting workers from wildfire smoke (outdoor workers)

<https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/wildfire/Worker-Protection-from-Wildfire-Smoke.html>

##### Protecting workers from wildfire smoke (indoor workers)

<https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/wildfire/Indoor-Protection-from-Wildfire-Smoke.html>

##### U.S. Small Business Administration

<https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/manage-your-business/prepare-emergencies>

