

NEWS RELEASE

News Release No.: 2017-93

Date: October 13, 2017

Cal/OSHA Issues Advisory for Worker Safety in Wildfire Regions

Oakland—Cal/OSHA is advising employers that special precautions must be taken to protect workers from hazards from wildfire smoke.

Smoke from wildfires contains chemicals, gases and fine particles that can harm health. The greatest hazard comes from breathing fine particles, which can reduce lung function, worsen asthma and other existing heart and lung conditions, and cause coughing, wheezing and difficulty breathing.

Cal/OSHA has [posted materials](#) that provide guidance for employers and workers on working safely in conditions with heavy smoke caused by the wildfires. Employers with operations exposed to wildfire smoke must consider taking appropriate measures as part of their Injury and Illness Prevention Program under Title 8 [section 3203](#) of the California Code of Regulations and as required under [section 5141](#) (Control of Harmful Exposure to Employees). Those measures include:

- Engineering controls whenever feasible (for example, using a filtered ventilation system in indoor work areas)
- Administrative controls if practicable (for example, limiting the time that employees work outdoors)
- Providing workers with respiratory protective equipment, such as disposable filtering facepieces (dust masks).
 - 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 approved by the US National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).
 - Approved respiratory protective equipment is necessary for employees working in outdoor locations designated by local air quality management districts as “Very Unhealthy,” “Unhealthy” or “Hazardous.”
 - It takes more effort to breathe through a respirator, and it can increase the risk of heat stress. Frequent breaks are advised.

Workers feeling dizzy, faint or nauseous are advised to go to a clean area, remove the respirator and seek medical attention.

- Respirators should be discarded if they become difficult to breathe through or if the inside becomes dirty.

Cal/OSHA helps protect workers from health and safety hazards on the job in almost every workplace in California. [Cal/OSHA's Consultation Services Branch](#) provides free and voluntary assistance to employers to improve their health and safety programs. Employers should call (800) 963-9424 for assistance from Cal/OSHA Consultation Services.

Employees with work-related questions or complaints may contact DIR's Call Center in English or Spanish at 844-LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734). The California Workers' Information line at 866-924-9757 provides recorded information in English and Spanish on a variety of work-related topics. Complaints can also be filed confidentially with [Cal/OSHA district offices](#).

Members of the press may contact Erika Monterroza or Peter Melton at (510) 286-1161, and are encouraged to [subscribe to get email alerts](#) on DIR's press releases or other departmental updates.

###



The [California Department of Industrial Relations](#), established in 1927, protects and improves the health, safety, and economic well-being of over 18 million wage earners, and helps their employers comply with state labor laws. DIR is housed within the [Labor & Workforce Development Agency](#). For general inquiries, contact DIR's Communications Call Center at 844-LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734) for help in locating the appropriate [division or program](#) in our department.