Wildfire Smoke Protection Training

UC Berkeley has measures in place to inform you of, and protect you from, the dangers of inhaling wildfire smoke.

Read the information below, based on Cal/OSHA Appendix B to Title 8 Section 5141.1. The standard is applicable when the current Air Quality Index for fine particulate matter (PM2.5) is 151 or greater. It applies to employees who work outside or in non-filtered buildings and/or vehicles for more than one hour per shift.

Recognize

Health Effects

Fine particulates suspended in air are the main harmful pollutant for people who are not very close to wildfires. Recognize symptoms from inhalation of particulate matter, which include lung irritation, persistent coughing, phlegm, wheezing, or difficulty breathing. More serious health effects include reduced lung function, bronchitis, worsening of asthma, heart failure, and early death. People who have existing heart and lung problems, or are over 65 years of age, are most likely to suffer serious health effects.

Locate the local

Air Quality Index

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is a measurement of pollution in air. Although there are AQIs for several pollutants, Title 8 section 5141.1 is based on the AQI for PM2.5. PM2.5 has a diameter of 2.5 micrometers or smaller and is considered the most harmful size of particulate matter.

Locate the AQI for your area at:

www.AirNow.gov
https://tools.airfire.org
www.arb.ca.gov/capcoa/dismap/htm
www.enviroflash.info

When you notice the air quality is worsening, or if you’re suffering symptoms due to the air quality, you may be exposed to wildfire smoke and the AQI for PM2.5 is 151 or greater, you must be provided: a) the current AQI before and periodically during each shift, b) training, such as this fact sheet, c) work modifications to reduce your exposure, and d) respirators with encouragement and instruction on how to use them. Consult with your supervisor for questions about additional protections that may be available to you.

Obtain prompt

Medical Treatment

University Health Services located at 2222 Bancroft Way (or 642-2000) provides medical treatment to employees who become ill or injured due to wildfire smoke exposure during work. Follow campus procedures to obtain prompt medical treatment without fear of reprisal. After-hours assistance: uhs.berkeley.edu/after-hours

Emergency: Call 911

Importance & Benefits

The University will select respirators certified for protection against the specific air contaminants in your workplace. When properly selected and worn, respirators effectively reduce your exposure to wildfire smoke and protect your health. Check your respirator or respirator packaging for a label or statement of certification from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

Examples of protective controls the University may implement include:

- Locate work in protected areas where air is filtered (enclosed structures or vehicles)
- Change procedures (i.e. move workers to a place with lower current AQI for PM2.5)
- Reduce work time in areas with unfiltered air
- Increase rest time and frequency; provide rest area with filtered air
- Reduce the physical intensity of work to help lower breathing and heart rates

An N-95 filtering facepiece respirator is the minimum level of protection for wildfire smoke.

For more information regarding limitations and how to properly put on, use, and maintain N-95 facepiece respirators and other masks made of filter material, visit bit.ly/UCB-Wildfire or see the handout attached.

Supervisors must establish a means of communicating worsening air quality conditions to employees. If the AQI becomes harmful, you will be alerted in-person, via text, email, website, radio, or other effective method. Notify your supervisor if you notice the air quality is worsening, or if you’re suffering symptoms due to the air quality.

Properly Select & Use Respiratory Protection

An N-95 filtering facepiece respirator is the minimum level of protection for wildfire smoke.

For more information visit the UC Berkeley Wildfire Smoke and Air Quality resource page:

https://uhs.berkeley.edu/health-topics/wildfire-smoke-air-quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AQI Category</th>
<th>Level of Health Concern</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 50</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 to 100</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 to 150</td>
<td>Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151 to 200</td>
<td>Unhealthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201 to 300</td>
<td>Very Unhealthy</td>
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<tr>
<td>301 to 500</td>
<td>Hazardous</td>
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AQI Categories for PM2.5

At AQI levels of 151 or greater for PM2.5, the University must take additional precautions to protect you from wildfire smoke.
N-95 Filtering facepiece respirators are air-purifying respirators certified by NIOSH to have filter efficiency levels of 95% or greater. N-95 respirators filter out airborne contaminants including dusts, fumes, mists, and microbial agents such as tuberculosis bacteria & flu virus. An N-95 filtering facepiece respirator is the minimum level of protection for wildfire smoke. Respirator use can be beneficial even when the AQI for PM2.5 is 150 or less.

How to Put on N-95 Respirators

1. Read instructions. Wash your hands. Hold the respirator in one hand, with nosepiece at your fingertips. Let the straps hang loosely.

2. Place respirator under your chin, with the nosepiece up. Hold the respirator with one hand and pull the top strap over your head. Rest it on top of head.

3. Pull the bottom strap over your head and place it around your neck, below your ears.

4. Use both hands to mold the nosepiece to the shape of your nose by pushing inward with your fingertips. Check for secure fit.

5. Seal check. Cover respirator completely with hands and exhale sharply. If air blows on your face, readjust respirator (steps 3 & 4).

Proper Use & Maintenance

- Choose N-95 respirators certified for use to protect against the contaminant of concern.
- Read & follow instructions from the manufacturer.
- Check for a tight seal around the respirator every time you put the respirator on. The more air leaks under the seal, the less protection you receive.
- Keep track of your respirator as to not mistakenly use someone else’s.
- Inspect the respirator prior to use; check for damage and contamination.
- Replace your respirator if it becomes damaged, deformed, dirty, or difficult to breathe through.
- Ask your doctor before using a respirator if you have a lung or heart problem.
- Go to an area with cleaner air, take off the respirator, and seek medical help, if you experience symptoms (i.e. difficulty breathing, dizziness, or nausea).
- Dispose of the respirator in the normal trash, unless it was used in a medical facility or research area with specific disposal procedures, or if there is evidence it may be contaminated.
- Store your respirator properly to protect it from damage, contamination, extreme temperatures, damaging chemicals, and crushing or deforming the facepiece.

- DO NOT use surgical masks or other items over your nose and mouth (i.e. scarves, T-shirts, bandannas). They will not provide protection against wildfire smoke.
- DO NOT wear your respirator into atmospheres containing contaminants for which it is not designed to protect against. For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect you against gases, vapors, or highly toxic materials.
- DO NOT attempt to re-use, clean, or disinfect disposable filtering facepiece respirators.
- DO NOT allow facial hair, hair, jewelry, glasses, clothing, or anything else to prevent proper placement or come between your face and the respirator.

Review and follow instructions from the manufacturer on the respirator’s use, maintenance, cleaning, care, and limitations. Also follow instructions from the manufacturer and University regarding medical evaluations, fit testing, and shaving.

N-95 respirators only filter out particulate contaminants. They do not protect you from chemical vapors/gases, oxygen deficient atmospheres, high risk exposures such as those created by aerosol-generating procedures (i.e. bronchoscopy, autopsy) and asbestos handling. Facial hair reduces the effectiveness of N-95 respiratory protection, but shaving is not required for voluntary use. If you have facial hair, you may wear a loose-fitting powered air purifying respirator.

For questions about training, air monitoring on campus, or respirators: Contact the Office of Environment, Health & Safety (EH&S) at 510-642-3073 or ehs@berkeley.edu

During a wildfire smoke event, campus updates and health advisories will be posted by University Health Services at https://uhs.berkeley.edu/health-topics/wildfire-smoke-air-quality