

# OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH BRANCH

## Occupational Health Watch: September 2019

### Protecting Outdoor Workers from Wildfire Smoke

A new Cal/OSHA emergency regulation, effective July 29, 2019, requires that when the Air Quality Index\* is 151 or higher due to wildfire smoke, employers must:

- Allow workers to work indoors in effectively filtered buildings when feasible, or
- Relocate workers to areas with better air quality, or
- Provide outdoor workers with approved respirators, such as N95 respirators.

Employers must also check air quality at outdoor work sites at the start of each shift when they anticipate workers may be exposed to smoke.

The resources listed below offer details on the new regulation as well as information that can be used for worker trainings on the harmful effects of wildfire smoke and safe and effective use of respirators.

*\*This refers to the Air Quality Index (AQI) for particulate matter 2.5 micrometers and smaller (PM2.5).*



*Photo: Wildfire smoke can harm the health of exposed outdoor workers.*

*Image courtesy Stephanie Rodriguez/CAUSE*

### Resources

Fires and Health – California Department of Public Health website

Protection from Wildfire Smoke – Cal/OSHA Emergency Regulation 8 CCR 5141.1

Wildfire Smoke: A Guide for Public Health Officials – AirNow website

Worker Safety and Health in Wildfire Regions – Cal/OSHA website

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Email Occupational Health Watch (OHW@cdph.ca.gov) with feedback or change of address.

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