

Wildfire Smoke Prevention

Frequently Asked Questions

Where can PCC's procedures addressing working outdoors in wildfire season be found?

PCC's written Wildfire Smoke Protection Plan is part of PCC's Health & Safety Manual; more specifically, it's Chapter 25 of the Health & Safety Manual. It can be found on the EH&S webpage.

Under what circumstances should managers be concerned with their employees working outdoors during wildfire season?

Management's knowledge of the prevailing local air quality is essential to determining the conditions in which employees can safely work outdoors during wildfire season. Managers should know the Air Quality Index (AQI) value for the location(s) in which their employees are working as well as the current wildfire conditions in order to take appropriate action to limit their employees' exposure to wildfire smoke. H&SM Ch 25 describes the actions managers must take to ensure employee safety at various AQI values.

Are some employees more susceptible to smoke exposure than others?

Groups sensitive to wildfire smoke exposure are listed in H&SM Ch 25 and include persons with certain pulmonary, cardiac or circulatory conditions, other health conditions, smokers, pregnant women, children under 18 years of age and adults over 65 years of age. Environments with an AQI value of 101 or greater are deemed unhealthy for sensitive individuals.

What personal protective equipment (PPE) should employees wear when working under adverse wildfire smoke conditions?

The conditions under which managers are obligated to provide respiratory protection are described in H&SM Ch 25. Managers should provide respiratory protection, in the form of N95 filtering facepiece respirators, when AQI values reach or exceed 101 due to wildfire smoke. As AQI levels increase, respiratory protection offering increased protection is required. See H&SM Ch 25 for more information.

Are there alternatives to working outside when the air quality is poor and visibility is reduced due to wildfire smoke?

Managers of affected employees should monitor local AQI levels during wildfire season and reschedule outdoor work to other locations or other times depending on the overall regional AQI levels. These options are described in H&SM Ch 25.

What type of training is available for employees and/or managers regarding the hazards of smoke exposure, hazard controls and prevention?

An online training curriculum entitled *Wildfire Smoke Protection Plan* is available at MyCareer@PCC for employees that work outdoors during wildfire season and their managers.

How can managers keep track of outdoor air quality and make informed choices with respect to scheduling outdoor work for employees?

Managers should download the free Oregon Department of Environmental Quality OregonAir app and/or monitor the U.S. EPA's AirNow website. These tools should be used in conjunction with those found in H&SM Ch 25 to determine local AQI values at PCC locations, proximity to wildfires, wind direction and smoke plumes that may affect air quality.