

Within the last 10 years, on average, 42% of fires are human caused and 58% are lightning caused. Workers can be exposed to unhealthy conditions at work if wildfires are burning close to work areas. Smoke can travel quickly across large distances. It is important to understand the potential hazards and measures to minimize worker exposure.

What is in wildfire smoke?

It is a complex mixture of particles and gases containing chemicals. It may contain:

- Fine particulate matter
- Gases: carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides...

What determines what is in the smoke depends on many factors like what materials are burning. The components can vary over time and from fire to fire.

How to reduce exposure:

The primary approach to minimizing exposure for outdoor workers is to reduce contact with the smoke. Other controls include:

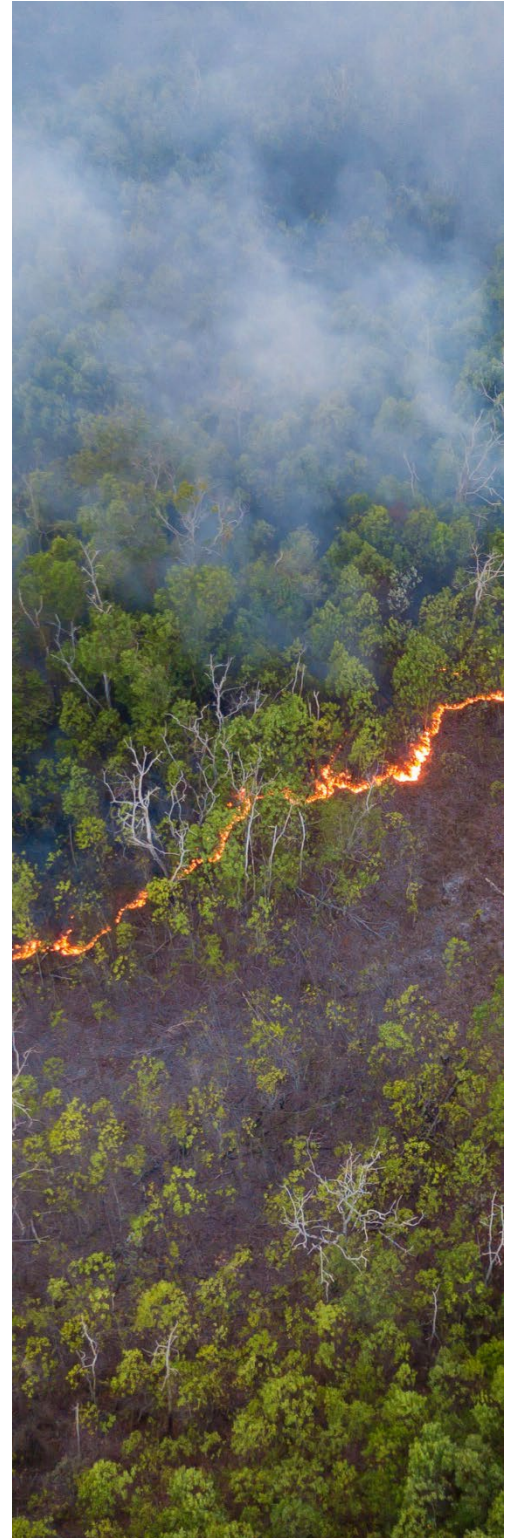
- Follow air quality advisories in the area
- Relocate work to a less smoky area or reschedule work to another time
- Reduce outdoor physical activity or exertion. When also exposed to heat stress, remember to drink lots of water.
- When working in vehicles, keep the vents and windows closed. Operate the air conditioning to “recirculate” mode.
- In some cases personal protective equipment can be used, such as respiratory protection. Ensure the correct respirator is selected and a fit test is completed.

Indoor workers can also experience harmful exposure from wildfire smokes. Controls that can be implemented to reduce the amount of wildfire smoke entering buildings:

- Inspect and check the HVAC systems to ensure they are working properly and are clean.
- Close windows to reduce exposure.

For more information and resources:

1. WorkSafeBC Wildfire Smoke: FAQ
<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/information-sheets/wildfire-smoke-frequently-asked-questions-faq>
2. BCMSA Wildfire Risk Assessment for Outdoor Workers:
<https://www.bcmsa.ca/risk-assessments/#toggle-id-8>
3. CCOHS: Forest Fires and Wildfire Smoke
https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/safety_haz/forest_fires.html



Safety Talk

Wildfire Smoke Exposure

MEETING DESCRIPTION			
Meeting Date:		Time:	
Location:		Supervisor:	
Number in Crew:		Number Attended:	
Attended By:			Absent

REVIEW ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING	INCIDENTS/INJURIES REVIEWED

TOPICS DISCUSSED
1.) Wildfire Smoke Exposure

WORKERS CONCERNS

CORRECTIVE ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

MEETING CONDUCTED BY			
Supervisor:		Manager:	
Date:		Date:	