

PROTECT WORKERS FROM WILDFIRE SMOKE



Tailgate Safety Training

Why is this safety training important?

In 2019, CalOSHA issued an emergency regulation to protect workers from increased exposure to wildfire smoke. This tailgate safety topic can be used to notify workers and cover the training required when the Air Quality Index (AQI) for Particulate Matter 2.5 (PM2.5) is 151 or higher, for more than one hour during a shift.

What is "Wildfire Smoke?"

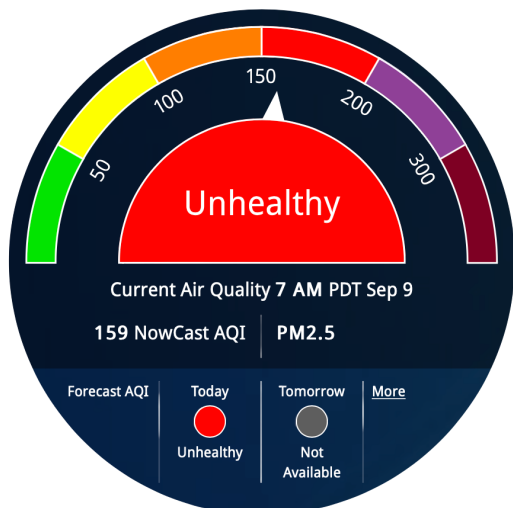
Wildfire Smoke is a combination of particles suspended in the air and other harmful chemicals. Like smog or other pollutants, wildfire smoke causes poor air quality and is an irritant that can trigger serious or fatal health effects. The CalOSHA regulation for wildfire smoke specifically targets particulate matter 2.5 microns wide, also known as PM2.5. To give you an idea of the size of a particle that is 2.5 microns wide, imagine taking a single grain of sugar, and breaking it into 4000 smaller pieces. Each of those individual pieces would be about 2.5 microns wide.

How much smoke is required to trigger the regulation's requirements?

The threshold to trigger the protection requirements of the regulation is 55.5 micrograms of PM2.5 in a cubic meter. The grain of sugar mentioned earlier is about 60 micrograms, so imagine having those 4000 pieces of PM2.5 floating around in a cubic meter. That would be enough PM2.5 to require steps to reduce worker exposure.

How do I measure the amount of PM2.5 in the air?

Fortunately, CalOSHA uses the existing Air Quality Index in weather forecasts instead of having companies take measurements with instrumentation. For PM2.5, an Air Quality Index rating of 151 or higher is the same as the 55.5 micrograms per cubic meter. You can find the AQI forecast at airnow.gov.



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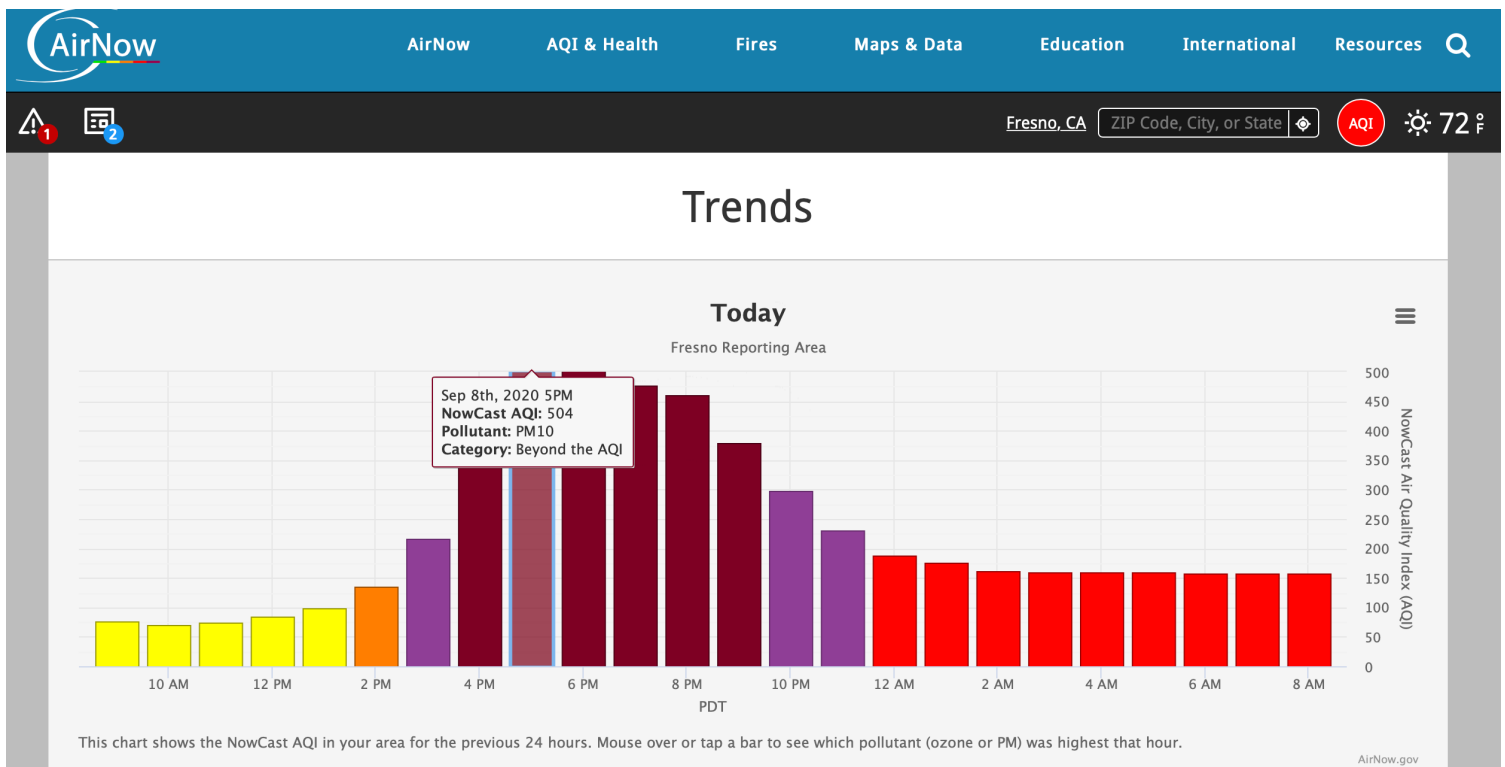
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What are the worker protections required if the AQI for PM2.5 is 151, or higher?

The most effective protection is to avoid outdoor work when the AQI is 151 or higher, but that is not always practical. Below is a list of measures to help protect workers.

- Employers must communicate wildfire smoke hazards to all affected employees, including encouraging employees to inform the employer of the hazard without fear of punishment.
- If possible, provide an alternative work location or structure for employees to work where the air is filtered.
- Adjust schedules and locations to avoid outdoor work when the AQI for PM2.5 is over 151.
- If workers must be on a job site with an AQI of 151 or higher, provide respirators for particulate matter, such as N-95 masks. Face coverings used for COVID, like bandanas and surgical masks will not meet the requirement. Use for these masks are voluntary for workers, unless the AQI exceeds 500.
- If the AQI is 500 or higher, then respirators are required for workers.
- As with any respirator, employees must be trained on their proper use. The manufacturer's instructions are usually the best resource for that training.



For more information or support, such as including these measures in your company's Injury and Illness Prevention Program, feel free to contact Arthur & Hansen LLC. You can visit us on our website www.arthurandhansen.com or find us **@arthurandhansenllc** on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), or [YouTube](#).