

July 30 2019 Cal/OSHA Emergency Regulation to Protect Outdoor Workers from Wildfire Smoke in Effect

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Posted by CSTC Staff

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Department of Industrial Relations State of California made a News Release July 30 2019, stating — "Cal/OSHA's emergency regulation requiring employers to protect workers from hazards associated with wildfire smoke is now in effect, following its approval yesterday by the Office of Administrative Law."

Click here for the full news release (<https://www.dir.ca.gov/DIRNews/2019/2019-66.pdf>)

Below is a text copy of the above PDF document

NEWS RELEASE P.O. Box 420603 · San Francisco, CA · 94142-0603 ·
www.dir.ca.gov

News Release No.: 2019-66

Date: July 30, 2019

Cal/OSHA Emergency Regulation to Protect Outdoor Workers from Wildfire Smoke in Effect

Sacramento—Cal/OSHA’s emergency regulation requiring employers to protect workers from hazards associated with wildfire smoke is now in effect, following its approval yesterday by the Office of Administrative Law.

The emergency regulation (<https://www.dir.ca.gov/oshsb/Protection-from-Wildfire-Smoke-Emergency.html>), effective through January 28, 2020 with two possible 90-day extensions, applies to workplaces where the current Air Quality Index (AQI) for airborne particulate matter (PM 2.5) is 151 or greater, and where employers should reasonably anticipate that employees could be exposed to wildfire smoke.

Under the new emergency regulation, employers must take the following steps to protect workers who may be exposed to wildfire smoke:

- Identify harmful exposure to airborne particulate matter from wildfire smoke at the start of each shift and periodically thereafter by checking the AQI for PM 2.5 in regions where workers are located.
- Reduce harmful exposure to wildfire smoke if feasible, for example, by relocating work to an enclosed building with filtered air or to an outdoor location where the AQI for PM 2.5 is 150 or lower.
- If employers cannot reduce workers’ harmful exposure to wildfire smoke so that the AQI for PM 2.5 is 150 or lower, they must provide:
 - Respirators such as N95 masks (https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh_publications/N95-mask-questions.pdf) to all employees for voluntary use, and
 - Training on the new regulation, the health effects of wildfire smoke, and the safe use and maintenance of respirators.

As noted in the July 18 press release (<https://www.dir.ca.gov/DIRNews/2019/2019-62.pdf>) announcing the Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board's adoption of the emergency regulation, Cal/OSHA will convene an advisory committee in Oakland on August 27 to establish a permanent regulation using the regular rulemaking process. Meeting details and documents (https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/DoshReg/advisory_committee.html) are posted on Cal/OSHA's website.

The Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board (<https://www.dir.ca.gov/oshsb/oshsb.html>), a seven-member body appointed by the Governor, is the standards-setting agency within the Cal/OSHA program. The Standards Board's objective is to adopt reasonable and enforceable standards at least as effective as federal standards. The Standards Board also has the responsibility to grant or deny applications for variances from adopted standards and respond to petitions for new or revised standards.

Cal/OSHA helps protect workers from health and safety hazards on the job in almost every workplace in California. Employers and workers who have questions or need assistance with workplace health and safety programs can call Cal/OSHA's Consultation Services Branch (<http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/consultation.html>) at 800-963-9424.

Complaints about workplace safety and health hazards can be filed confidentially with Cal/OSHA district offices (<http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/Complaint.htm>). Employees with work-related questions or complaints may contact DIR's Call Center in English or Spanish at 844-LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734).

Members of the press may contact Erika Monterroza or Frank Polizzi at (510) 286-1161, and are encouraged to subscribe to get email alerts (<http://www.dir.ca.gov/email/listsab.asp?choice=1>) on DIR's press releases or other departmental updates.

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The California Department of Industrial Relations (<http://www.dir.ca.gov/>), established in 1927, protects and improves the health, safety, and economic well-being of over 18 million wage earners, and helps their employers comply with state labor laws. DIR is housed within the Labor & Workforce Development Agency (<http://www.labor.ca.gov/>). For general inquiries, contact DIR's Call Center at 844- LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734) for help in locating the appropriate division or program (<http://www.dir.ca.gov/Contactus.html>) in our department.

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