

Wildfire Awareness

IT IS SET TO BE ANOTHER RECORD BREAKING WILDFIRE SEASON – ARE YOUR EMPLOYEES TRAINED AND PROTECTED?

Safeguarding Workers Amidst Escalating Wildfire Hazards

As wildfires become increasingly frequent and severe, it is crucial for employers and employees to understand the associated dangers and financial impacts. Here are five critical statistics highlighting the threats and costs of wildfires in the United States:

1. Record-Breaking Fire Seasons:

- In 2020, wildfires scorched over 10.3 million acres, setting a new record. The Western U.S. continues to face increasing wildfire activity due to prolonged droughts and higher temperatures.

2. Economic Impact:

- The economic burden of wildfires was estimated at

\$16.5 billion in 2020, considering firefighting costs, property damage, and business interruptions□□.

3. Health Implications:

- Wildfire smoke in 2020 caused significant health issues, leading to an estimated 1,200 to 3,000 premature deaths and thousands of hospital admissions

4. Occupational Risks:

- Firefighters and outdoor workers are at high risk during wildfire seasons. In 2020, over 7,000 wildland firefighters were deployed, often working in hazardous conditions with high risks of heat-related illnesses and respiratory issues.

5. Environmental and Long-term Costs:

- In 2020, wildfires emitted an estimated 112 million tons of CO₂, contributing significantly to climate change and long-term ecological damage□.

Safety Measures and Preparedness

To mitigate these risks, it is vital for organizations to implement comprehensive wildfire response plans, including:

- **Risk Assessment and Monitoring:** Regularly assess wildfire risks and monitor fire conditions through reliable sources.
- **Protective Measures:** Provide workers with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and ensure access to clean air shelters.
- **Training and Education:** Educate employees about wildfire risks and safety procedures, including evacuation routes and health precautions.
- **Emergency Plans:** Develop and rehearse emergency response plans tailored to wildfire scenarios, ensuring all workers know their roles and responsibilities.

By staying informed and prepared, we can protect our workforce and minimize the devastating impacts of wildfires on our communities and economy, and **Safety *OnDemand* can be that resource for you.**

FAQ

What are the primary health risks for workers exposed to wildfire smoke?

Workers exposed to wildfire smoke can experience a range of health issues, including respiratory problems (e.g., asthma exacerbation, bronchitis), cardiovascular effects (e.g., heart attacks, strokes), eye irritation, and reduced lung function. Long-term exposure can lead to chronic respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. It is crucial to monitor air quality and provide appropriate protective measures such as N95 masks and access to clean air shelters.

How can employers protect outdoor workers during wildfire events?

Employers should implement several protective measures to safeguard outdoor workers during wildfires:

- Monitor air quality using reliable sources and adjust work schedules to minimize exposure during poor air quality periods.
- Provide N95 masks or respirators to filter out harmful particles.
- Ensure access to clean air shelters or indoor spaces with air filtration systems.
- Educate workers on the symptoms of smoke exposure and heat-related illnesses.
- Develop and rehearse emergency response and evacuation plans.

What steps should be included in an emergency response plan for wildfires?

An effective emergency response plan for wildfires should include:

- Regular risk assessments and monitoring of fire conditions.
- Clear communication protocols for alerting employees about fire risks and evacuation orders.

- Designated evacuation routes and safe assembly points.
- Training for employees on emergency procedures and the use of protective equipment.
- Coordination with local emergency services and compliance with regulations from authorities like OSHA and FEMA.

What are the economic impacts of wildfires on businesses and communities?

Wildfires can have significant economic impacts, including:

- Direct costs related to firefighting efforts and emergency responses.
- Property damage and loss of infrastructure, which can halt business operations.
- Indirect costs such as reduced air quality affecting worker health, leading to increased healthcare expenses and lost productivity.
- Long-term environmental damage that can affect industries like agriculture, forestry, and tourism.

How can businesses prepare for wildfire seasons to minimize disruptions?

Businesses can prepare for wildfire seasons by:

- Developing and implementing comprehensive wildfire preparedness and response plans.
- Investing in fire-resistant building materials and creating defensible space around properties.
- Establishing remote work capabilities to maintain operations if evacuation orders are issued.
- Ensuring adequate insurance coverage for wildfire-related damages.
- Engaging with local fire departments and community organizations for support and resources.

What are the environmental consequences of wildfires, and how do they affect OHS practices?

The environmental consequences of wildfires include loss of biodiversity, soil degradation, water contamination, and increased carbon emissions, which contribute to climate change. These effects can lead to long-term health risks for communities and workers. OHS practices must adapt by:

- Incorporating environmental monitoring and air quality assessments into regular safety protocols.
- Educating workers about the environmental impacts and health risks associated with wildfires.
- Promoting sustainable practices that reduce the likelihood and severity of wildfires, such as proper land management and fire-safe landscaping.

ADDITIONAL INSIGHT

Wildfire Smoke 101 – Using an Air Purifier to Filter Wildfire Smoke

Wildfire smoke can get inside your home through windows, doors, vents, air intakes and other openings.

Safety Talk

Those who are most vulnerable to the health effects of wildfire smoke will benefit the most from using an air purifier in their home. People who are at a higher risk of health problems when exposed to wildfire smoke include: [LINK](#)

Wildfire Smoke 101 – How to Prepare For Wildfire Smoke

Communities across North America experience wildfire smoke events, typically from April to October.

Safety Talk

If you can't maintain clean air inside your home during a wildfire

smoke event, be aware of locations in your community where you can find clean air. [LINK](#)

Safety Talks

Train employees on Fire Safety

Safety Talks

Download 45 compliant safety meeting kits on fire safety in english, french and spanish. Our safety meeting kits include safety talks, handouts, quizzes, powerpoints, videos and more designed to engage and train employees across a variety of industries. [LINK](#)

Wildfire Smoke and Your Health

Wildfire season typically runs from early April to late October.

Safety Talk

Wildfire season typically runs from early April to late October. As wildfire burns through forests and grasslands, it produces dense smoke that can be a major source of toxic air pollutants. This pollution contains fine particles (that are not visible to the human eye) that penetrate deep into our lungs and bloodstream, sometimes leading to serious health effects. Those at greater risk of these effects are... [LINK](#)

Wildfire Smoke 101 – Wildfire Smoke and Your Health

Wildfires can significantly increase air pollution levels.

Safety Talk

There is no evidence of a safe level of exposure for most of these pollutants. This means that smoke can impact your health even at very low levels. As smoke levels increase, your health risks increase. Air quality may be decreased even if you can't see or smell smoke. [LINK](#)

ICW Wildfire Preparedness

Pdf

ICW Wildfire Preparedness

Online Resources for Safety Professionals to Prepare for Wildfires

National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC)

- [NIFC](#) provides comprehensive information on wildfire management, including safety protocols, training materials, and real-time data on wildfire incidents.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

- OSHA Wildfire Preparedness offers guidelines for protecting workers during wildfires, including information on respiratory protection, heat stress, and emergency response.

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)

- NFPA Wildfire Safety offers resources on wildfire safety, community preparedness, and the Firewise USA program.

Ready.gov

- Ready.gov Wildfires provides preparedness tips, safety checklists, and information on creating an emergency plan for businesses and individuals.

FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency)

- FEMA Wildfire Resources includes tips for wildfire preparedness, recovery assistance, and tools for creating a family communication plan.

Wildfire Smoke: A Guide for Public Health Officials

- EPA Wildfire Smoke Guide by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency provides detailed information on the health effects of wildfire smoke and recommendations for public health responses.

Wildland Fire Assessment System (WFAS)

- [WFAS](#) provides fire danger ratings, fuel moisture maps, and other data to help professionals assess wildfire risks.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- [CDC Wildfire Smoke](#) offers health tips for protecting against wildfire smoke, including guidance on masks and air quality monitoring.

Firewise USA® Program

- Firewise USA® helps communities prepare for and reduce the risk of wildfire damage through collaborative projects and education.

Cal Fire (California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection)

- [Cal Fire Wildfire Preparedness](#) provides resources on wildfire prevention, emergency response, and safety tips for homeowners and businesses in wildfire-prone areas.