

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

**Memorandum**

*Making Conservation  
a California Way of Life.*

To: DEPUTY DISTRICT DIRECTORS, Construction  
DEPUTY DIVISION CHIEF, Structure Construction  
CONSTRUCTION MANAGERS  
SENIOR CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERS  
RESIDENT ENGINEERS

Date: September 3, 2020

File: Division of Construction  
CPD 20-19



From: RACHEL FALSETTI, Chief  
Division of Construction

Subject: **GUIDANCE REGARDING WILDFIRE SMOKE AND PROTECTION**

This directive provides Caltrans Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Division of Construction staff guidance to protect outdoor workers exposed to smoke from wildfires.

Effective July 29, 2019, California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) approved emergency regulation, California Code of Regulations, Title 8, Section 5141.1 (8 CCR 5141.1), "Protection from Wildfire Smoke," which applies to workplaces and operations where the current Air Quality Index (AQI) for Particulate Matter 2.5 (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) is 151 or greater (unhealthy) and where the employer should reasonably anticipate that employees may be exposed to wildfire smoke. This regulation is applicable to contractors as well as Caltrans. Refer to Attachment 1, "*New Cal/OSHA Regulations to Protect You from Wildfire Smoke*," and the following link for details regarding this regulation:

[https://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/5141\\_1.html](https://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/5141_1.html)

To be in compliance with this regulation, Caltrans construction supervisors are to take the following steps:

- 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<sub>2.5</sub> in regions where workers are located. To check the current AQI, use the methods described in Attachment 1 and 8 CCR 5141.1(c).
- Implement a system for communicating wildfire smoke hazards:
  - Supervisor to employees: Supervisor must inform employees through primary communication (typically through mobile phone where adequate service is available) when the current AQI for PM<sub>2.5</sub> is 151 or greater and where the supervisor should reasonably anticipate that employees may be exposed to wildfire smoke.

- Employees to supervisor: Employees are encouraged to inform their supervisor of the following:
  - Worsening air quality; and
  - Any adverse symptoms that may be the result of wildfire smoke exposure such as asthma attacks, difficulty breathing, and chest pain.
- Provide training and instruction: As required by California Code of Regulations Title 8, Section 3203, "Injury and Illness Prevention Program," Caltrans must provide employees with effective training and instruction. For resources regarding protecting employees from wildfire smoke, please refer to the Employee Safety Training and Educational Materials intranet page by the Caltrans Office of Employee Health and Safety at:

<https://hs.onramp.dot.ca.gov/employee-safety-training-and-educational-materials>

This intranet site contains a flowchart to select proper protective personal equipment for wildfire smoke protection, a fact sheet for workers and a checklist for supervisors to promote protection against wildfire smoke, a training video to provide guidance regarding wildfire smoke prevention for Caltrans employees to satisfy the new Cal/OSHA regulations, an AQI Monitoring Form, and additional information and resources.

- Implement engineering controls, when feasible, to reduce employee exposure to unhealthy air quality (AQI above 151), or as low as possible if reducing exposure to AQI below 151 cannot be achieved. Examples on engineering controls include providing enclosed structures or vehicles for employees to work in, where the air is filtered.
- Implement administrative controls: whenever engineering controls are not feasible or do not reduce employee exposure to unhealthy air quality (AQI above 151), implement administrative controls, if practicable, such as relocating work to a location where the current AQI is lower, changing work schedules, reducing work intensity, or providing additional rest periods.
- Provide Respiratory Protective Equipment and encourage its use: AQI levels above 150 require supervisors to make sure there are enough N95 (or higher) respirators to wear voluntarily; for AQI levels over 500, respiratory protection is mandatory. Due to current shortages of N95 and P100 masks, Cal/OSHA is allowing the use of the non-National Institutes of Occupational Safety and Health approved KN95 respirator for voluntary use only. Continue using N95 or P100 masks when available. When voluntary respirator use is permissible refer to California Code of Regulations, Title 8, Section 5144, Appendix D, "Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard," for basic information to follow on the use of respirators.

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If the contractor requests suspension of work due to unhealthy AQI or other wildfire-related reasons (such as availability of crews or materials), grant suspension for days on which the contractor could not perform at least 50 percent of the scheduled work with at least 50 percent of the scheduled labor and equipment because of an unanticipated fire event, including resulting air quality, not caused by either contractual party are non-working days (reference Section 1-1.07B, "Glossary," of *the Standard Specifications*). In addition, record non-working days for suspended work that is on the critical path.

If you have questions about this directive, please contact Phillip Phan, Division of Construction, at [Phillip.Phan@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Phillip.Phan@dot.ca.gov) or (916) 651-3621.

Attachment:

1. New Cal/OSHA Regulations to Protect You from Wildfire Smoke