

# Managing Wildfire Smoke Exposure

Instructor Guide

## Safety Talk Overview:

**What & Why?** Safety Talks are a method to refresh an employee’s knowledge and skills, maintain their interest in safety and illustrate the organization’s commitment to creating a healthy & safe work environment.

**Who & When?** Generally, these Safety Talk meetings are led by a supervisor, member of the JHSC, or Worker H&S Representative and should be mandatory for all crew members to attend. The content should be focused on a single topic. Safety Talks can be performed on a weekly basis or before the start of a new scope of work and should be about 15 minutes in duration.

go2HR developed this safety talk template for employers to customize and use for any topic in their organization. The Participant Handout should include information that you hope the worker will retain from the safety talk content and should be handed out during the safety talk for workers to reference later. Feel free to use it at your discretion.

**Wildfire Smoke Overview**

Summers in much of B.C. are increasingly hotter and drier, leading to more frequent and intense wildfires. Wildfire smoke has become a significant environmental and psychological hazard that workplaces and communities must manage. As a worker, it's crucial to be prepared and take measures to manage the effects of wildfire smoke and minimize exposure.

**Safety Talk Outline (using the handout below):**

1. Wildfire Overview

2. Symptoms of Smoke Exposure

3. Actions to Take

**Additional Resources:**

- [Managing Stress & Anxiety](https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/topicsearch?searchstring=Anxiety&page=0&pagesize=10)

- [Protecting workers from wildfire smoke and heat stress | WorkSafeBC](https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/news-events/campaigns/2024/June/protecting-workers-from-wildfire-smoke-heat-stress)

- [Wildfire smoke: Frequently asked questions | WorkSafeBC](https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/information-sheets/wildfire-smoke-frequently-asked-questions-faq)

- [Air quality advisories - Province of British Columbia (gov.bc.ca)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/air/air-quality/air-advisories)

## Topic Overview:

## 

## Safety Talk Facilitator Guidance

🞏 **Introduce** the topic and why it’s important

🞏 **Discuss** the associated hazards and likely incidents

🞏 **Tour** the work zone identifying hazardous areas

🞏 **Distribute** the Participant Handout

🞏 **Use** the info above to guide the discussion

🞏 **Document** the talk using the Safety Talk Record

🞏 **Explain** what controls are used to minimize the risks

🞏 **Remind** employees about applicable PPE usage

🞏 **Emphasize** the importance of safe work procedures

🞏 **Ask questions** to generate group discussion

🞏 **Answer any questions** or concerns they might have

🞏 **Set a good example** by working safely at all time

# Managing Wildfire Smoke Exposure

Safety Talk Record

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Discussion Leader:** | **Date:** |
| **Department:** | Time: |

### Attendees (Please print your name and sign beside it. If you are a contractor, also include your company name):

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### Near miss/incidents and investigations reviewed: ☐ None this month

### Any questions or concerns from workers?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Action needed:** | **Person responsible:** | **Due date:** | **Completed date:** |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Supervisor/Manager print name & sign:** | **Date:** |

### Reviewed by:

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**Wildfire Smoke Overview**

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**Symptoms of Smoke Exposure**

Harmful effects of wildfire smoke can vary depending on the level and duration of exposure, age, and other factors. Symptoms of smoke exposure can include:

-Irritation in the eyes, nose, and throat.

-Headaches and allergies.

-People with heart or lung conditions or other chronic diseases, pregnant women, and older adults are likely to experience more acute symptoms including, shortness of breath, coughing and wheezing, and chest tightness.

**Actions to Take**

-**Monitor Air Quality**: Stay updated on air quality advisories in BC and participate in evaluating wildfire smoke risks.

-**Engage in Open Dialogues**: Discuss the emotional and psychological impacts of wildfire smoke exposure with your team. Understand that some of your colleagues, especially workers from other countries, might be experiencing these conditions for the first time.

-**Discuss Common Concerns**: Share and address questions like "Where is the fire?", "How long will this last?", and "What are the health risks?" Seek support from mental health resources to manage stress and anxiety.

**Acknowledge Home Community Concerns:** Understand that wildfires may be impacting the home communities of co-workers. Whether there’s a fire close to where someone lives or a local community has been affected, be sensitive to concerns for the safety of friends, loved ones, and property.

-**Adapt Work Locations and Schedules**: If possible, speak to your supervisor about relocating or rescheduling work to less smoky areas to avoid peak smoke conditions.

-**Reduce Physical Activity**: Lower your physical exertion levels during smoky conditions to minimize health risks.

**-Consider Alternative Work**: If you are more susceptible to smoke-related health effects, discuss temporary alternative work assignments with your supervisor.

-**Use Protective Equipment**: Consider using a properly fit-tested, certified N95 half-face respirator.

**-Report Symptoms**: If you experience any symptoms, report them immediately to your employer and treat the situation as you would any other injury or illness.

By taking these actions, you can help protect your health and well-being during wildfire smoke events.

**Additional Resources:**

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Participant Handout

### For more information on this topic or if you have questions, contact: