

# Wildfire Smoke Exposure and Construction Workers

The entire region is dealing with severe air quality issues from the wildfire smoke, and hazardous conditions have been occurring for several days and will continue for several more. Outdoor construction workers are particularly at risk, as they typically are exposed for at least an eight-hour shift and do not always have the ability to get out of the smoke, even if only for a few minutes.

Monitoring the air quality index (AQI) for your specific jobsites is the best way to determine your worker exposures. Please refer to [this website](#) for an up-to-date and accurate AQI for your specific location:

<https://www.airnow.gov/?city=Salem&state=OR&country=USA>

AGC recommends that worker health risks are considered when the AQI reaches 150–200, which is considered unhealthy.

- Reassign or relocate outdoor work activity to minimize worker exposure.
- Some workers may have existing respiratory conditions or be more susceptible to smoke exposures than others. Ask your workers about their ability to work in smoky conditions and to share their concerns, if any.
- Consider providing workers with masks. While N-95 masks are in short supply, other respiratory protection will provide some protection, including N-99, N-100, or an elastomeric respirator with P100 cartridges that offer the same level of filtration. Face coverings such as those worn for COVID-19 are not respirators and are not designed to provide protection from ash and smoke. Refer to your company Respirator Program for full requirements of respirator use.
- As the AQI increases, more controls need to be implemented.
- When the AQI is 300 or greater, outdoor work should be extremely limited and ceasing outdoor operations should be considered.

## Air Quality Index

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Levels of Health Concern	Numerical Value	Meaning
Good	0 to 50	Air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
Moderate	51 to 100	Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	100 to 151	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.
Unhealthy	151 to 200	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Very Unhealthy	201 to 300	Health warnings of emergency conditions. The entire population is more likely to be affected.
Hazardous	301 to 500	Health alert: everyone may experience more serious health effects.