



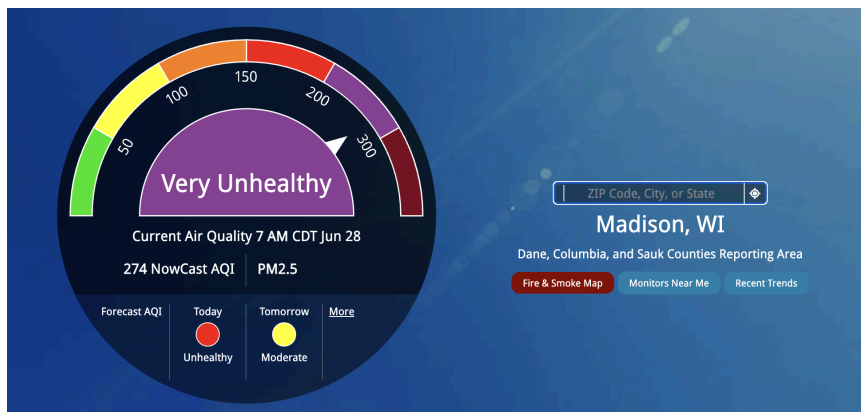
## Staying Safe While Working in Conditions of Smoke and Fire

***“Employers have a legal and ethical obligation to provide a workplace free from recognized hazards. When the sky is turning orange with wildfire smoke, that’s a hazard we all can recognize.” – Marcy Goldstein-Gelb, National COSH***

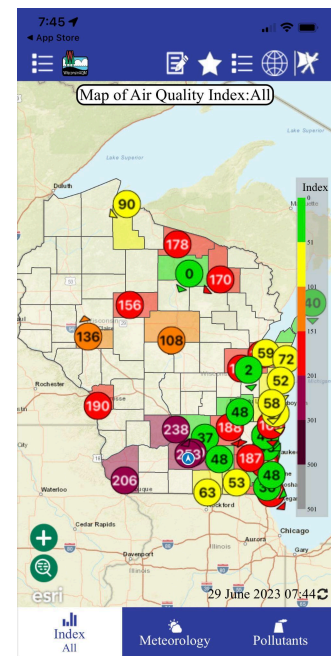
\*Presiona [aquí](#) para ver una versión en español

### **Best Practices:**

- Include a formal section in your employee handbook so that related protocols and practices are transparent for all. See [here](#) for an example from Carnation Farms in Washington and [here](#) for an example from Little Wings Farm in Oregon. (See the “Key Educational and Training Resources” section below for additional examples and templates.)
- Continue to closely [monitor the air quality index \(AQI\)](#) in your region. According to [National COSH](#), “an AQI of 100 or higher means risks for sensitive groups. An AQI of 151 or higher means breathing outdoor air is dangerous for everyone.”



- Your state might have a free mobile app that provides air quality updates, [like this one](#) pictured to the right.



- Minimize or discontinue time spent outside based on the AQI in your area, and look for indoor tasks to focus on (packing, organizing, record-keeping, etc.) – ideally in a structure where the air is filtered. See [here](#) for a June 2023 Consumer Report publication on “Best Air Filters for Wildfire Smoke.” Find a how-to guide for building box fans to filter indoor spaces [here](#).
- Understand that higher-intensity outdoor tasks like wheel hoeing and spreading mulch are not ideal for these conditions.
- Encourage everyone to drink water and get enough rest.
- Ask individuals to monitor themselves and those around them for symptoms of exposure. Watch for eye, nose, and throat irritation, coughing, headache, fatigue, chest pain or difficulty breathing, and an increased heart rate. Some individuals, including those with pre-existing heart and lung conditions, will be especially at risk. If someone is experiencing symptoms, they should notify a manager and contact a healthcare provider.

### **Questions to Consider:**

- Does your state have any rules outlining actions employers must take to keep individuals safe and healthy during wildfire smoke events? As inclement weather events increase in frequency, more states are proposing and adopting formal rules that outline employer requirements.
- How will you monitor the air quality on the farm? How often will you do this, and how will you communicate it to others in a transparent way?
- Does your farm have a formal protocol in place to guide workplace actions and decisions during times of poor or dangerous air quality?
- Are you consulting employees about what they need to make working in difficult conditions more comfortable and more safe? What does this process look like?
- Can you develop a growing list of low-intensity outdoor tasks and indoor tasks to focus on when environmental conditions aren’t ideal?
- Can you alternate indoor and outdoor tasks? Can you incorporate regular breaks to allow employees to take off masks and breathe clean air?
- If an employee is experiencing symptoms of exposure, will they be compensated for any hours they aren’t able to work?
- If work cannot occur due to safety reasons, will employees be compensated for that time?

- Will you offer hazard pay if employees agree to work under certain conditions?
- Can you increase the number of PTO days offered, which increases employees' ability to prioritize their safety? Several farms contributing to this resource mentioned taking this approach.

### **Materials to Have on Hand:**

- Provide employees with proper respiratory protection equipment, like clean N95 masks that fit snugly (like [these](#)) or disposable filtering facepiece respirators.  
***Note that medical face masks and KN95 masks do not provide protection from wildfire smoke.***
- Consider laminating and displaying [these posters](#) on the farm.

### **Key Educational and Training Resources:**

- [Wildfire Smoke Exposure: Employer Training Guide](#) - UC Davis (*use this in conjunction with the training posters linked immediately below*)
- [Wildfire Exposure Training Posters](#) - UC Davis
- [Smoke Exposure in the Workplace](#) - UC Davis
- [AirNow Fire and Smoke Map](#) - Environment Protection Agency
- [Develop a Heat and Air Quality Safety Plan for Farm Workers](#) (University of Minnesota Extension)
- [Respirators & Air Filters for Air Quality Hazards and Wildfire Smoke](#) - Agricultural Justice Project
- [Wildfire Smoke Safety Plan Template](#) - Agricultural Justice Project

**Thank you to the farmers who have contributed to this resource! If you have protocols or formal practices in place on your farm around working safely in extreme weather conditions and are open to sharing them with others, please contact Sarah ([sjanes@wisc.edu](mailto:sjanes@wisc.edu)) or Anita ([anita@notourfarm.org](mailto:anita@notourfarm.org)).**