

Statement from Oregon OSHA and OHA on Particulate Respirators and Masks

People who must be outdoors when wildfire smoke is present may consider using particulate respirators to help protect themselves. Employers may be required, in some situations, [to provide respirators to workers for voluntary use or ensure workers wear them](#). Here is what you need to know about particulate respirators and masks during wildfire smoke:

- Avoid the use of surgical masks, bandanas and other common masks. These have not been shown to prevent smoke exposure.
- There are specialized masks that can help prevent some smoke exposure. These are called particulate respirators. You will need to understand their limitations and proper use.
 - Particulate respirators, commonly known as N95s, protect against the fine particles found in smoke, they do not protect wearers from the harmful gases found in wildfire smoke.
 - Be sure to select a particulate respirator marked with the word "NIOSH." If it has an "N", "R" or "P" along with the number 95, 99, or 100 printed on it, it is appropriate for use.
 - People with pre-existing health conditions should speak with their health care provider, prior to using a particulate respirator. The wearer may find breathing more difficult while wearing a respirator. Breathing may be even more difficult for those with heart and lung conditions.
- Users need to select a respirator that fits properly to ensure a protective seal around the face.
 - The type of respirator that filters out harmful smoke particles is not available in children's sizes.
 - For the most protection, it is important to understand how to put one on, properly position it on your face and how to remove it.



- Oregon OSHA offers how-to videos in [Spanish](#) and [English](#).
- Facial hair can cause the respirator to seal incorrectly.
- The fit of the respirator must be tested to make sure air does not leak around the sides. Leaking air means that exposure to smoke can still occur.
- Oregon OSHA's wildfire smoke rule includes the potential use of particulate respirators. The rule allows only NIOSH-approved respirators.
 - KN95s are no longer acceptable because their federal emergency use authorization was canceled.
 - Also, NIOSH-approved respirators have become accessible again after a period of shortages.
- Employers with questions about the use of particulate respirators in the workplace may contact Oregon OSHA's Consultation Services.
- Workers have a right to a safe and healthy workplace. That includes the right to raise concerns free from retaliation and to file a complaint with Oregon OSHA.



Resources

Oregon OSHA's wildfire smoke rule

- <https://osha.oregon.gov/OSHARules/adopted/2022/ao4-2022-text-smoke-exposure.pdf>

Oregon OSHA video

- English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucmx_hj1SW8
- Spanish: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNQCVKRK970>

Oregon OSHA Consultation Services

- <https://osha.oregon.gov/consult/Pages/index.aspx>
- Filing a complaint with Oregon OSHA:
<https://osha.oregon.gov/workers/Pages/index.aspx>

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