



Toolbox Talk

Wildfire Awareness and Response

Topic: Working Safely Near Active Wildfires

Why This Matters

Wildfires can change direction, intensity, and speed with very little warning. Even if a fire is many miles away, smoke, wind shifts, and evacuation orders can quickly create dangerous conditions.

Our goal is simple:

- Stay aware.
- Recognize changing conditions.
- Never hesitate to stop work if conditions become unsafe.

Know the Hazards

Watch for:

- Heavy smoke reducing visibility.
- Poor air quality causing breathing difficulties.
- Falling ash and embers.
- High winds changing fire direction.
- Road closures.
- Limited evacuation routes.
- Heat stress and dehydration.
- Increased vehicle accidents from reduced visibility.

Warning Signs Conditions Are Getting Worse

Immediately notify your supervisor if you observe:

- Smoke becoming noticeably thicker.
- Ash falling on the worksite.
- Strong smell of smoke increasing.
- Wind direction changing toward your location.
- Emergency vehicles increasing in the area.
- Law enforcement or fire officials issuing warnings.
- New evacuation notifications on your phone.
- Never assume someone else has already reported it.



Before Starting Work

Ensure you know:

- Primary evacuation route.
- Secondary evacuation route.
- Designated meeting location.
- Local emergency contact numbers.
- How your supervisor will communicate an emergency evacuation.

Keep your vehicle fueled whenever practical and avoid blocking access roads needed by emergency responders.

During Work

Remain alert throughout the day.

Take additional precautions if:

- Air quality worsens.
- Visibility decreases.
- Winds increase.
- Ash begins falling.

If you cannot clearly see surrounding terrain because of smoke, conditions are becoming unsafe.

If an Evacuation Order Is Issued

- Stop work immediately.
- Secure equipment only if it can be done safely.
- Leave using the designated evacuation route.
- Follow instructions from emergency responders.
- Do not attempt to drive around barricades.
- Report your status to your supervisor as soon as practical.

Lives are always more important than equipment or production.

Protect Yourself From Smoke

Smoke exposure can cause eye irritation, coughing, headaches, shortness of breath, fatigue, and dizziness.

If you experience symptoms:



- Notify your supervisor.
- Move to cleaner air.
- Seek medical attention if symptoms worsen.

Workers with asthma, COPD, or heart conditions should be especially cautious.

Remember

- Wildfires move faster than most people expect.
- The safest decision is often to leave early—not late.
- No deadline or project milestone is worth risking your life.

Discussion Questions

- Do you know your evacuation routes?
- How will you receive emergency notifications?
- Who do you contact if conditions begin changing?
- What signs would cause you to stop work immediately?

Contractor Expectations

All subcontractors are expected to comply with local emergency orders, follow their company emergency response procedures, maintain communication with project supervision, and immediately report any changing wildfire conditions that could affect personnel or site safety. Safety decisions will always take precedence over schedule.