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TO: UAW Ford Local Union Leadership

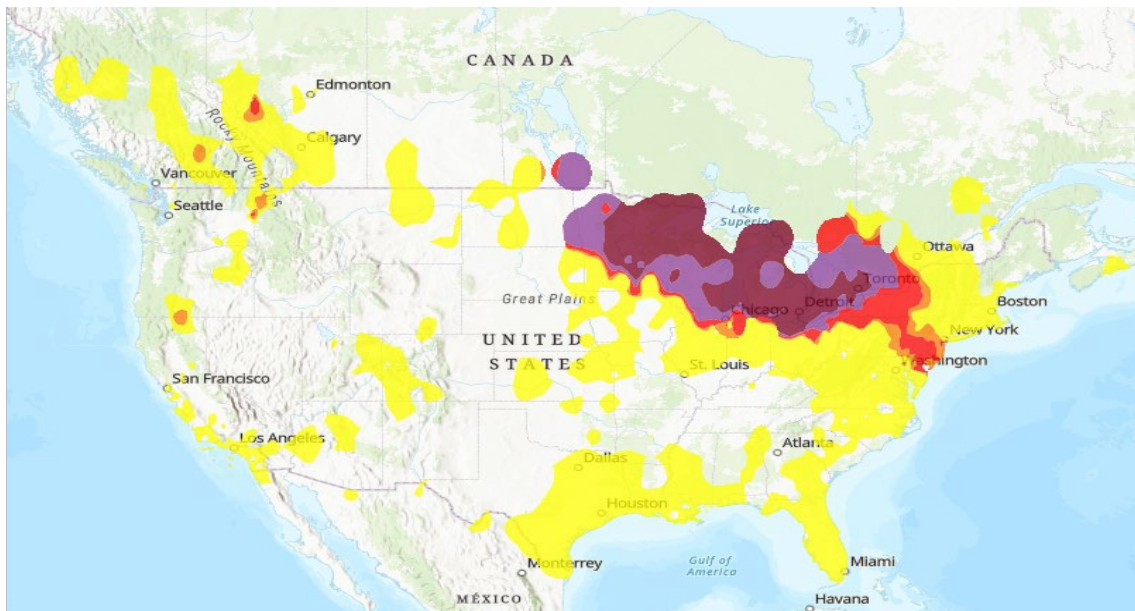
SUBJECT: Wildland Fire Smoke Information

Wildland fire smoke presents a major hazard to workers and the public. Right now, parts of the United States and Canada have extremely high levels of ozone and particulate matter in the air due to the ongoing wildland fires. The continued excessive heat only makes the situation more hazardous for workers. This is not just a hazard for people outdoors, wildland fire smoke exposure can happen indoors, too, through open doors and windows and through HVAC systems which cannot filter this number of particles.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Air Quality Index (AQI) is a range of air quality from “Good” to “Hazardous” based on levels of particulates in the air. Each level carries greater risks for workers and members of the public, especially those who are older or have underlying health conditions. The Michigan Department of Health and Human services has a helpful chart displaying the EPA Air quality and guidelines for each level:

AIR QUALITY INDEX	Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5 Guidelines for Everyone: Modifying Indoor and Outdoor Activities
Green: Good (0 - 50)	Everyone can enjoy being outside.
Yellow: Moderate (51 - 100)	Most everyone can enjoy being outside. For those who are unusually sensitive* to fine particles from wildfire smoke, monitor for symptoms** and consider making outdoor activities shorter and less intense.
Orange: Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (101 - 150)	- People living with lung and heart disease, adults aged 60+, pregnant people and children should make outdoor activities shorter and less intense. - Prevent smoke from entering homes by closing windows and minimizing the opening of outside doors. If HVAC systems are not equipped with MERV 13 filters or higher, use portable air cleaners to maintain good indoor air quality. If possible, close the outdoor air intake on air conditioners.
Red: Unhealthy for Everyone (151 - 200)	- Everyone should reduce long or intense outdoor activities. People living with lung and heart disease, adults aged 60+, pregnant people and children are recommended to seek cleaner air indoors. - Prevent smoke from entering homes by closing windows and minimizing the opening of outside doors. If HVAC systems are not equipped with MERV 13 filters or higher, use portable air cleaners to maintain good indoor air quality. If possible, close the outdoor air intake on air conditioners. - Masks*** are recommended for children, pregnant people and other sensitive people while outdoors.
Purple: Very Unhealthy (201 - 300)	- Everyone should avoid long or intense outdoor activities and reschedule or move all outdoor activities indoors, if possible. People living with lung and heart disease, adults aged 60+, pregnant people and children are recommended to seek cleaner air indoors and keep activity levels low. - Prevent smoke from entering homes by closing windows and minimizing the opening of outside doors. If HVAC systems are not equipped with MERV 13 filters or higher, use portable air cleaners to maintain good indoor air quality. If possible, close the outdoor air intake on air conditioners. - Create clean-air rooms where children and other sensitive people can stay and be further evaluated if needed. - Masks*** are recommended for all people if they must be outside. - If you are unable to stay inside your own house, you are recommended to seek a temporary shelter location that has clean indoor air.
Maroon: Hazardous (300+)	- Everyone should seek cleaner air indoors and keep activity levels low. - Prevent smoke from entering homes by closing windows and minimizing the opening of outside doors. If HVAC systems are not equipped with MERV 13 filters or higher, use portable air cleaners to maintain good indoor air quality. If possible, close the outdoor air intake on air conditioners. - Create clean-air rooms where children and other sensitive populations can stay and be further evaluated if needed. - Masks*** are recommended for all people if they must be outside. - If you are unable to stay inside your own house, you are recommended to seek a temporary shelter location that has clean indoor air.
*Unusually sensitive may include those with asthma, other respiratory conditions or heart conditions. **Symptoms could include wheezing, coughing, chest tightness, dizziness or burning in nose, throat and eyes. ***Masks: During a wildfire smoke event, the best place to be is inside with good air quality. If you cannot avoid wildfire smoke, use an N95 or P100 respirator marked with “NIOSH.” The respirator should fit tightly, collapse as you breathe in and not let air in from the sides. If N95 or P100 respirators are not available or do not fit well, properly selected KN95 and KF94 respirators also filter particulate matter. Medical or surgical masks are the least effective option and should only be used as a last resort. Cloth, paper masks and tissues will not filter out wildfire smoke. Do not use masks for children under age 2.	

The EPA runs the [AirNow Fire and Smoke Map](#), in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, which provides information that you can use to help protect your health from wildland fire smoke. As of 8:00am Eastern today, this is what the map looked like:



Symptoms and health effects from exposure to wildland fire smoke can vary. Some workers may be at higher risk from wildland fire smoke because of their age or health conditions, such as heart or lung disease. Working long hours or doing physically demanding jobs can also increase risk because heavier breathing causes more smoke to be inhaled. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), [exposure to wildland fire smoke](#) can lead to several health effects, including:

- Symptoms such as eye irritation, sore throat, wheeze, and cough,
- Asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) exacerbations,
- Bronchitis and pneumonia,
- Adverse birth outcomes, and
- Cardiovascular (heart and blood vessel) outcomes.

NIOSH also provides information to help employers and workers to take steps to limit exposure to wildland fire smoke. If work must be done in smoky conditions, especially for long periods, or if a worker is sensitive to smoke and experiences health effects, the following measures can help reduce smoke exposure:

- Frequently monitor air quality conditions in the area by visiting the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [US Fire and Smoke Map](#) or the state health department's air quality website

- Relocate or reschedule work tasks to smoke-free or less smoky areas or times of the day
- Reduce levels of physical activity, especially strenuous and heavy work
- Require and encourage workers to take frequent breaks in places that are free from smoke
- Limit the worker's smoke exposure by making accommodations for that worker to perform their duties indoors or in a location that reduces exposure to smoke

The most protective option when air is unhealthy is to stay indoors. To reduce exposure to wildland fire smoke while working indoors, employers or building managers can:

- Ensure that windows and other building openings such as loading docks are kept closed to reduce overall smoke exposure inside
- Operate heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems in the recirculate setting or temporarily reduce the amount of outdoor air supplied to the building
- Install the highest efficiency filters recommended by the designer or manufacturer of the HVAC system.
- Install air cleaners equipped with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter or electrostatic precipitators. **Do NOT use ozone or ion generating devices.** These can make air quality worse, especially for people with underlying health conditions.

If workers must be outside, respirators may be one of the easiest, and in some cases the only control to implement for limiting a worker's exposure to the particulate matter in wildland fire smoke. Employers may need to consider alternative controls and solutions when respirators are not easily available.

If an employer requires their employees to use respiratory protection to limit smoke exposure, they must always do it as part of a comprehensive respiratory protection program as required under the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration's \(OSHA\) Respiratory Protection standard \(29 CFR 1910.134\)](#). When respirators are used on a voluntary basis in an occupational setting, employers should follow the [OSHA requirements for the voluntary use of respirators](#).

Things to remember about respirators and other masks:

- Filtering facepiece respirators (like N95 or P100 respirators) only protect against exposures to particles like the particulate matter in wildland fire smoke. They do not protect against gases or other non-particle exposures.
- Tight-fitting respirators cannot be used by people with facial hair that interferes with the face seal.

- Wearing a respirator or mask, especially if it is hot or you are physically active, can increase the risk of heat-related illness. Take breaks often and drink water.

In solidarity,



Laura Dickerson
Vice President and Director
UAW National Ford Department

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