

Wild Fire Exposures: Smoke

When wild fire breaks out in Alberta, it can raise questions about coverage, reporting responsibilities and process. The following information will help you determine your responsibility as an employer during this unusual period.

Most instances of exposure to wild fire smoke are not work related and should not be reported to WCB-Alberta. However, there are a few exceptions.

The following effects of exposure to wild fire smoke may be considered work-related

When a worker sustains illness or injury as a direct result of employment, the worker is entitled to compensation if the following conditions are met:

The nature of employment involves significant exposure to the poor air quality environment.	and	The nature of employment is shown to be the cause of the condition.
or		
The nature of employment creates a greater risk of exposure for the worker.		

Work-related example:

Construction worker	Works outside and is likely to have extended exposure to smoke in the air.
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Non work-related example:

Restaurant worker	Job is indoors and does not increase the exposure to the smoke during work time.
Office worker	Job is indoors and does not increase the exposure to the smoke during work time.

All claims reported to WCB-Alberta will be adjudicated on the merit and unique circumstances of each case.

Question & Answer

1. When do I report a case of wild fire smoke exposure to WCB-Alberta?

If the exposure meets the specified criteria and medical treatment is required. Like in the examples provided, if your staff is exposed more at work than in the normal course and also lose time from work, then a claim needs to be reported to WCB-Alberta for adjudication. Exposure alone does not result in a claim.

2. If I am an employer and I believe my staff is at greater “risk of exposure” at work than the general public, do I need to report all exposures?

No, only claims for the effects of the exposure must be reported to WCB-Alberta. If workers were exposed but develop no symptoms or problems like itchy eyes or trouble breathing, the incident must be recorded in your records but not reported to WCB.

3. If I am an employer whose staff is at greater “risk of exposure” at work than the general public and have shut my operations down because there is a high risk of exposure, do I need to report to WCB?

No, only claims for the effects of the exposure must be reported to WCB-Alberta. If there is no illness and no treatment is required, there is no claim.

4. If my employee has sought treatment for the effects of smoke exposure do I need to report to WCB?

Yes, we will determine work relatedness using the criteria outlined previously.

