

This fact sheet will benefit wildfire disaster site workers including Federal, State and Local personnel outlining the main hazards associated with post wildfire sites.

If you have questions on the following information, contact FEMA Safety (626) 431-3913

Environmental Hazards:

Weather

- Heat – **Drink** water to reduce heat stress
- Cold – proper clothing
- Sunburns – use sunscreen
- Lighting, thunderstorms -- pay attention to weather and news updates

Worker concerns

- Fatigue – monitor working hours including breaks
- Ergonomic Injuries – use proper lifting and avoid twisting
- Animals, Insects and Harmful Plants – use repellants
- Working around Heavy Equipment & Vehicles – stay alert and aware of surroundings make sure operator sees you

Vehicle safety

- Fatigue – if you're tired, don't drive
- Personal distractions – avoid distractions including cell phones
- Drive defensively – be aware of other drivers' actions

Traumatic Stress

Workers responding to a wildfire may experience traumatic stress. A traumatic event is an emotional situation in which an individual perceives actual or threatened death or serious injury.

Individuals with prolonged traumatic stress (anxiety, depression, etc.) that disrupts their daily functioning should consult mental health professionals. The **Emergency Assistance Program** is available should you need additional assistance: **(800) 222-0364**.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Such as: Hard hat, safety goggles or glasses (sun resistant), respirator, work gloves, steel toe/sole boots, coveralls and ear protection. Ensure you have what you need.

Smoldering Material

Smoldering debris may remain for weeks and could reignite if combined with combustible materials or if oxygen becomes available (i.e. disturbing debris).

- Be aware of the state of your surroundings
- Have an escape route

Harmful Dust and Soot

- Protect yourself in dusty environments. Dust left after a wildfire may contain ash, fire retardant, asbestos, heavy metals and other toxic materials.
- Avoid walking in single file lines- those behind the leader may be exposed to high levels of dust.

Unstable/dangerous areas

Fires can rearrange and damage many types of structures.

- Assess the area and choose the safest path
- Only walk and work on surfaces known to be stable
- Look for smoldering material which may be buried
- Watch for fall hazards
- Never assume fire-damaged structures or ground are stable
- Only trained personnel should enter a confined space
- Avoid leaning structures and trees
- **Leave immediately if you hear shifting or unusual noises - A COLLAPSE MAY BE OCCURRING**

Electrical Hazards

Electricity can cause electrocution and burns.

- Avoid working with electricity in wet environments
- Electric cords and outlets must meet OSHA standards
- Use Ground-Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) on all power tools and cords
- Do not re-energize electrical systems until they have been evaluated by a qualified electrician
- Stay away from downed power lines. Report downed lines and assume they are live

Carbon Monoxide (CO)

Carbon Monoxide has no warning properties; it is a colorless, odorless gas!

Symptoms: Headache, dizziness, drowsiness, or nausea progressing to vomiting, loss of consciousness.

Prolonged or high exposure can lead to coma or death.

Hand and Portable Power Tools, Portable Generators, Pressure Washers, Chainsaw Use

Inspect, operate, adjust, and maintain according to manufacturer's operating and safety instructions and OSHA requirements.

Safe use guidelines include:

- Take damaged tools out of service
- Keep bystanders or coworkers clear of work area
- Understand hazards associated with chemicals used in or around equipment
- Wear appropriate PPE

Know how to get help for workplace emergencies