

Forest Fires Rage Across the Country

Canada is on fire. Forest fires have already burned thousands of hectares across Western Canada and Nova Scotia and are currently burning through parts of Ontario and Quebec. Much of the country is expected to be under high or extreme risk for fires this summer according to federal government officials. Smoked plumes have deteriorated air quality in many communities making physical work even more difficult for outdoor workers in these areas.

People with respiratory issues could be at risk and must monitor the situation closely.

As previously explained, Canada Post has adopted an operational policy to ensure that appropriate precautionary steps are taken in locations where poor air quality puts people's health at risk, based on Environment Canada's Air Quality Health Index (AQHI):

https://weather.gc.ca/airquality/pages/index_e.html

When air quality is poor, it is important to take preventive measures. Every day, Environment Canada's experts measure the AQHI across the country and publish on their website (see link above) the quality of outdoor air on a scale of 1 to 10. The higher the number, the greater the health risk.

Canada Post has suspended mail delivery in many communities across the country. To ensure that everyone is working in a safe environment, it is essential to have the AQHI assessed by members of the Local Joint Health and Safety Committee (LJHSC) or health and safety representatives by consulting the Environment Canada website (link above). A LJHSC member or health and safety representative should participate in the implementation of preventive measures based on the AQHI.

If the measured air quality reaches 10 or above (very high risk), based on the AQHI, Canada Post will apply the following measures:

- Each day, determine the preventive measures required to keep workers safe;
- Allow workers the autonomy to decide whether it is safe to deliver the mail;
- Employees who choose to deliver the mail will be provided additional support, including face masks, water, throat lozenges, etc.;
- Employees who choose not to deliver the mail will be provided with other work similar to their own job (inside duties of a letter carrier, e-learning, etc.). They may also contact neighbouring depots to see if they need any help.

Employees who feel unsafe doing their jobs due to the poor air quality should speak to their local health and safety representative or a union member of the LJHSC.

Workers can exercise their right to refuse to work under these conditions at any time. Urban members can refer to clause 33.13 of their collective agreement, and RSMCs and private sector unit members are governed by the health and safety provisions of the *Canada Labour Code*.

Any disagreement or issue that cannot be resolved by the LJHSC or the health and safety representative should be referred to the regional office.

We urge all members to **report any incident or discomfort** pertaining to poor air quality caused by forest fires.

In Solidarity,



Marc Roussel
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Health and Safety

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