

AIR QUALITY POLICY

<Insert Company Name> is committed to complying with the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017, codes of practice and other safety guidance material like the National Clean Air Agreement. Management will proactively assist workers with concerns about working in environments with poor air quality.

Poor Air Quality

A major cause of poor air quality is bushfires and dust storms that can occur frequently in Australia. Generally these come with heat exposure risks also.

Bushfire smoke is made up of small particles, gases and water vapour. The particles are very small and are not visible to the human eye. The gases in bushfire smoke include carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxide. Fine smoke particles are known to affect the human breathing system. The smaller the particles, the deeper they go into the lungs.

These particles can cause itchy or burning eyes, throat irritation, runny nose and illnesses such as bronchitis. The smoke particles can also aggravate existing lung conditions, such as chronic bronchitis, emphysema and asthma.

Dust storms are natural events and are common in parts of Australia. Widespread drought can dramatically increase the likelihood of major dust storms, particularly during the summer months. Dust storms may have adverse effects on health, particularly for people who already have breathing-related problems. Dust particles vary in size from coarse to very fine. The smaller the particle the greater potential to cause serious harm to your health.

Those Most at Risk

Outdoor workers and workers who perform manually taxing tasks are more likely to be affected by poor air quality.

People at higher risk of health harms from breathing poor quality air are:

- Those with asthma or lung problems of any kind
- Those with other chronic illnesses like heart disease, diabetes or a previous stroke
- Older people, especially those over 65 years
- Babies and children, especially those less than five years old
- Pregnant women

Health Effects

For these people, exposure may:

- Trigger allergic reactions and asthma attacks
- Cause serious breathing-related problems
- Contribute to cardiovascular or heart disease
- Contribute to reduced life span

Air Quality Index (AQI)

The AQI is a simple, easy to understand index calculated from air quality data for 5 pollutants (Ozone, Carbon monoxide, Sulphur dioxide, Nitrogen dioxide, and Airborne particles). It reports hourly and daily.

AQI tells you how clean or polluted your air is, and what associated health effects might be a concern for you. The colour represents the quality.

AQI	What action should people take?
Very good 0-33	Enjoy normal activities
Good 34-66	Enjoy normal activities
Fair 67-99	People unusually sensitive to air pollution should reduce or reschedule strenuous outdoor activities. Others are not likely to be affected when the AQI is in this range.
Poor 100-149	Sensitive groups should reduce strenuous outdoor activities. Other adults are not likely to be affected. Anyone who experiences symptoms should reduce outdoor activities.
Very poor 150-200	Sensitive groups should avoid strenuous outdoor activities Other adults should reduce or reschedule strenuous outdoor activities.
Hazardous 200+	Sensitive groups should avoid all outdoor activities. Other adults should avoid strenuous outdoor activities.

All states have their own AQI to account for their own areas and some use slightly different scales. You should check the most relevant state resource.

- Australian Capital Territory: <https://www.health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/population-health/environmental-monitoring/monitoring-and-regulating-air-0>
- New South Wales: <https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/air-quality/current-air-quality>
- Queensland: <https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/air-quality/>
- South Australia: https://www.epa.sa.gov.au/data_and_publications/air_quality_monitoring
- Tasmania: <https://epa.tas.gov.au/epa/air/monitoring-air-pollution/real-time-air-quality-data-for-tasmania>
- Victoria: <https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-community/airwatch>
- Western Australia: <https://www.der.wa.gov.au/your-environment/air/air-quality-index>

What Actions Can You Take?

If you are concerned inform your manager.

When the air quality is poor, everyone should:

- **Follow your doctor's advice** about medicines and your asthma management plan if you have one. Keep your medication close at hand. Consult your doctor if symptoms worsen.
- **Management** can consider portable air cleaners with a high-efficiency particulate air or HEPA filter for the indoor work areas.
- **PPE** Appropriate facemasks can be used. (P2 face masks are recommended)
- **Reduce or avoid vigorous outdoor activity** see activity guide above.
- **Spend more time indoors.** Keep doors and windows shut to keep the smoke out. Open windows and doors whenever the smoke clears.
- **Spend time in air-conditioned rooms**
- **Avoid indoor sources of air pollution** like cigarettes, candles and incense sticks.

Anyone with persistent symptoms should seek medical advice.

Specific Actions in Managing Heat / Poor Air Quality

(These are suggestions only and you should review this information to determine which of the following control measures your business has in place currently and amend as applicable – please delete points or add to based on your individual business)

Working in Heat

- Weekly operational pre-planning meetings to scope out the work for the coming week which considers the weather conditions, activities to be undertaken and additional control measures
- Rescheduling non-essential works to days when the risk of heat is lower
- Sun Safety Procedure
- Worker education of the risks of working in heat including identification of the signs of heat stress and early reporting of issues
- Amending shift arrangements to vary the start and finish times of outdoor workers to reduce the exposure during the hottest part of the day
- Rotating tasks during the day where possible, to reduce the risks of prolonged heat exposure
- Providing alternate duties e.g. indoor activities such as training, WHS document reviews, housekeeping etc if appropriate
- Providing portable sheds with air conditioning to allow access to cool areas for rest breaks (if appropriate)
- Consulting with workers on rest break periods to ensure safety and service requirements are met
- Providing portable shade structures (if appropriate) ensuring these are appropriately restrained
- Conducting daily pre-start risk assessments with workers in each workgroup to identify heat risks and determine what control measures will be in place
- Toolbox talks on hot days which remind workers of the effects of heat, symptoms and first aid as well as what control measures will be used on the day
- Frequent monitoring of the temperature by supervisors and adjustments of activities to suit conditions in consultation with staff, particularly any with special needs (e.g., cardiac conditions)
- Insulating/covering hot or heat emitting equipment
- Using mechanical aids to reduce manual labour
- Providing the following to workers:
 - air-conditioned vehicles and air-conditioned plant
 - light weight clothing hats
 - sunscreen
 - ice machines for workers to fill their eskies/drink
 - fresh water (and encouraging workers to drink water regularly)
 - Hydrolyte sachets/ice blocks provided to workers

- Personal cooling systems

Working in bush fire smoke / dust conditions

- Weekly operational pre-planning meetings to scope out the work for the coming week which considers the weather conditions, activities to be undertaken and additional control measures
- Rescheduling non-essential works to days when the risk of bushfire smoke is lower
- Reviewing the work allocated to outdoor workers with special needs, e.g., severe asthma
- Monitoring of the forecast air quality by Managers/Supervisors each morning, with additional controls being implemented as indicated
- Ongoing monitoring of the air quality (hourly in some circumstances) by Managers/Supervisors each morning through subscription notifications, with appropriate additional controls being implemented
- Cessation of outdoor work if the air quality reaches very hazardous conditions
- Education of workers
- Providing alternate duties e.g. indoor activities such as training, WHS document reviews, housekeeping etc if appropriate
- Restricting outdoor work to essential emergency works during harmful periods
- When workers are required to complete emergency works/repairs outdoors, the following risk mitigation measures are used: The provision of respiratory protection (P2 or P3)¹ masks with a fit test², the use of mechanical aids to reduce the physical demands of the task, using interim controls where appropriate (e.g., fencing an area of broken footpath off for later repair), task rotation where practicable (e.g., rotating workers in and out of an airconditioned shed / vehicle), providing hydrating fluids and adequate rest breaks.
- Ensuring that minimal outside air is entering buildings on relevant days, through measures such as keeping doors and windows closed, providing properly maintained air conditioning units (with additional portable units provided where indicated), liaising with building managers to reduce the percentage of external air entering the building, and relocating relevant workers to air conditioned buildings on high risk days

¹ Select the appropriate mask for the particulate size and follow supplier instructions regarding replacement.

² Workers with beards and thick moustaches may be unable to be fitted.