



Preparing for Wildfire Season: Steps for Securing Free N95 Masks for First Nations

Wildfire Smoke and Air Quality Reference Guide for Indigenous Communities (2024)

Symptoms From Exposure to Smoke
Most common health and mild symptoms such as:
• eye irritation • cough
• throat irritation • runny nose
More severe symptoms include:
• dizziness • difficulty breathing
• chest pain • wheezing
• heart palpitation

Mental Health Impacts
Individuals living close to an active wildfire or within a smoke event may experience worsening mental health impacts such as:
• ANXIETY • GENERAL DISTRESS CAUSED BY NATURAL DISASTERS AND CLIMATE CHANGE
• DEPRESSION • POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER
Don't be afraid to reach out if you need help.
Visit the [Wildfire Helpline for Indigenous Peoples](#)
Health 811 | 1-800-368-7686 | Mental Health Support

Exposure to wildfire smoke can make existing diseases worse such as:
• CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE • ASTHMA • CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) Explained
• A tool to show the level of risk to your health of short-term exposure to air pollution in your area.
• It measures all air pollution, not just air pollution from fire smoke.
• It provides a scale of 1 to 10+ showing an air quality scale from low, moderate, high, to very high health risk. As the number on the air quality scale goes up, the greater the risk to your health.

Air Quality Health Index Categories, Values and Associated Colours

Low	Moderate	High	Very High
1-3	4-6	7-9	10+
Green	Yellow	Orange	Red

Health Risk According to AQHI Levels:
Low AQHI 1-3: Enjoy your usual outdoor activities.
Moderate AQHI 4-6: Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities if you are experiencing symptoms.
High AQHI 7-9: Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities. Children and the elderly should also take it easy.
Very High AQHI 10+: Avoid strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also avoid physical exertion.

Health Messages

How to Prepare for Smoke Impact:
Monitor changes in weather conditions with the [WeatherCAN](#) app.
Sign up to receive emails when a Special Air Quality or Air Quality Advisory has been issued for central regions.
Visit the [Air Quality Ontario website](#) that includes local forecasts and information forecast values for today, tonight and tomorrow.

Other helpful tools: These forecasts can offer information to predict how long wildfire smoke is expected to remain in an area.
[Provinces Forecast](#) up to 48 hours in advance during wildfire season from April to September.
[Government of Canada FireRisk System](#) From April to October (during and following) see how smoke from wildfire is expected to move across North America over the next 5 days.

Protect Yourself with a Respirator
When? If you must spend time outdoors.
What? NIOSH-certified N95 or equivalent respirator that does not allow air to pass through small openings between the mask and face.
Why? May help reduce your exposure to the fine particles in smoke, which pose the greatest risk to health. However, respirators do not reduce exposure to the gases in wildfire smoke.

Respirators should not be used by:
• Children under 2 years of age.
• Individuals who have trouble breathing while wearing the respirator.
• Someone who may need help to remove the respirator.

Where to get a respirator:
Your local Chemist and Pharmacy, wearing masks or health centres, or able to access these respirators for community distribution.

The Wildfire Smoke and Air Quality Reference Guide for Indigenous Communities (2024), produced by the First Nation Emergency Response Association and the Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority, aims to help people understand the health effects of wildfire smoke and how they can prepare themselves by monitoring the Air Quality Index and weather conditions.

In addition, community members may want to know where to access the right masks that may help reduce their exposure to the fine particles in smoke, which pose the greatest risk to health.

However, respirators do not reduce exposure to gases in wildfire smoke and should not be used by: children under 2 years of age, individuals who have trouble breathing while wearing the respirator, or by someone who may need help to remove the respirator.


How You Can Help: Supply Ontario offers eligible entities (e.g., Band Offices, Nursing Stations and/or Health Centers in First Nations communities or in urban areas) with **FREE 3M 1870+ N95 masks (in boxes of 440)** to assist in protecting community members.

Supply Ontario works closely with SLFNA and WAHA to make N95 masks available to eligible entities.

Step 1. Register for Supply Ontario's centralized PPE Supply Portal (PSP).

If your organization is not yet set up on the Portal, fill out the following form (for organizations already registered to access the PPE Supply Portal, please continue to Step 3).

Supply Ontario-Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Supply Portal Registration Form



Step 2. Receive email invitation.

Once your form has been reviewed to ensure you are an eligible entity, your account will be set up and you will receive a confirmation email invitation to access the Portal (PSP).

Step 3. Log In and Start Ordering!

- Go to ppesupply.ontario.ca and log in.
- Find products.
- Click **Add to Cart** (review your order and click **Continue to Checkout**).

Questions

If an eligible entity requires **assistance with registering** to the PPE Supply Portal or has **any additional questions about accessing N95 respirators**, please email:
SCO.supplies@supplyontario.ca

Have an urgent shipping request?

When an order is placed in the PPE supply Portal, there is a space below the item being ordered entitled **"Special Notes"**.

Type in: **"Emergency Order"** to this section to ensure the order is prioritized.

Help Desk Available
(Help Desk only available for technical support with the portal, not inquires.)
8am to 5pm ET, 7 days/week (excluding statutory holidays)
Toll Free 1-888-444-9102
ppesupplyportalhelp@ontario.ca

Who is Supply Ontario?
Supply Ontario is a Crown agency created by the Government of Ontario.
To learn more, visit supplyontario.ca