



Wildfire Smoke and Masks

People who must be outdoors may be considering the use of masks to help protect their lungs from wildfire smoke. Masks can create a false sense of security if not properly selected, fitted and used. There are a few things you should know if you are considering the use of a mask:

- Avoid the use of surgical masks, bandanas and other common masks. These have not been shown to prevent smoke exposure.
- Those with questions about use of masks in the workplace should contact their employers, or Oregon OSHA at <http://osha.oregon.gov/>.
- There are specialized masks that may prevent some smoke exposure.
- Most people will find it difficult to use these specialized masks, called particulate respirators, in a way that provides protection because:
 - Selecting the correct respirator size can be difficult.
 - The type of respirator that is able to filter out harmful smoke particles is not available in children's sizes.
 - The fit of the respirator must be tested to make sure air does not leak around the sides. Leaking air means that exposure to smoke can still occur.
 - Facial hair can cause the mask to not seal correctly.
 - The masks can be uncomfortable. Even healthy adults may find that the increased effort required for breathing makes it uncomfortable to wear a respirator for more than short periods of time. Breathing may be even more difficult for those with heart and lung conditions.
 - Care must be taken to select a "particulate respirator" that is marked with the word "NIOSH" and either "N95" or "P100" printed on it.