



June 26, 2019

## Forest Fires and Air Quality

Once again, forest fires have hit Western Canada and threaten nearby communities. They also affect air quality, which will make physical work even more difficult in the weeks ahead for postal workers.

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

Due to the high number of forest fires in recent years, Canada Post and CUPW have put in place a Functional Policy on Air Quality for Employees Working Outside.

This policy (T550083), which is available on Canada Post's Intranet site, provides for the creation of an Assessment Team made up of management representatives and members of the Local Joint Health and Safety Committee (LJHSC). In workplaces with 19 employees or less, the Assessment Team is made up of management representatives and the employees' Health and Safety Representative.

Using the Government of Canada portal, [https://weather.gc.ca/airquality/pages/index\\_e.html](https://weather.gc.ca/airquality/pages/index_e.html), the local assessment team will determine what actions to implement, based on the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) and how the situation progresses.

As soon as the AQHI reaches 7 (high risk) or more, on a scale of one to 10 and higher, the consultation process is triggered and a decision will be made. This process involves six different steps to ensure proper communication between the parties. These steps are as follows:

- |                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1) <b>Detection</b> | 4) <b>Decision</b> |
| 2) <b>Assemble</b>  | 5) <b>Share</b>    |
| 3) <b>Assess</b>    | 6) <b>Monitor</b>  |

Notwithstanding the above, if you feel that the air quality, regardless of the index reached, makes your work unsafe, you can **exercise your right to refuse at any time**. Urban members can refer to clause 33.13 of the collective agreement, while RSMCs are governed by the *Canada Labour Code* (Part II, Section 128).

Discuss these situations with your health and safety representative or a member of your Local Joint Health and Safety Committee.

Report any incident or discomfort caused by air quality, both outside and inside. An investigation will then have to be conducted by a supervisor, in the presence of a union representative.

In solidarity,

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