

Bushfire Smoke PPE : Face Masks /Respirators Factsheet



What do I need to know about wearing a mask?

Smoke from bushfires is made up of small particles, gases and water vapour. The particles are very small up to 1/30th the diameter of an average human hair and are not visible to the human eye.

The gases in bushfire smoke include carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds.

The following precautions can help you minimise adverse effects of bushfire smoke:

- Look out for air quality warnings and follow any published guidelines released by NSW Health.
- To avoid smoke, stay indoors with windows and doors closed, or stay in air-conditioned premises, if possible.
- Avoid vigorous exercise, especially if you have asthma or a lung condition.
- Whilst not mandated, you may wish to cover your nose and mouth with a mask designed to filter fine particles such as a P2 mask. These are available from hardware stores.

Why use a P2 face mask? (also called N95)

- If you want to wear a mask, P2 masks are recommended as amongst the masks available, these are most effective in blocking the finest particles when worn correctly.

Putting on and checking the mask

Take time to correctly identify which size and style of mask is suitable for you.

These masks are only effective if worn correctly.

Procedure for putting on a P2/N95 face mask and conducting a fit check:

1. Remove glasses and hats. Tie back long hair so it does not become tangled in the straps of the respiratory protection
2. Put the mask on your face, ensuring the nose piece is at the top of the mask
3. Place the headband or ties over the head and at the base of the neck
4. Compress the mask against the face to ensure a seal across the bridge of the nose
5. Compress the mask to ensure a seal across the cheeks and the face; and
6. Conduct a fit check: check the seal of the mask by gently inhaling. If the mask is not drawn in towards the face, or air leaks around the face seal, readjust the mask and repeat process or check for defects in the mask. If the mask still leaks you may need to try a different size or style of mask.
7. If you have facial hair (including a one to two day beard growth) be aware that an adequate seal cannot be guaranteed.
8. Follow any instructions from the manufacturer that might appear on the packaging.

For more information

Visit the website at www.health.nsw.gov.au