

# Environmental safety:

# Staying prepared in changing conditions

## Emergency prep tips

- Be prepared: Keep an emergency kit with essentials like water, first aid supplies, and a flashlight.
- Stay informed: Regularly check local weather alerts (monitor heat index using OSHA's heat safety tool ([bit.ly/3DPU21S](https://bit.ly/3DPU21S))) and air quality indexes (using AirNow ([bit.ly/4jfpVji](https://bit.ly/4jfpVji))), especially during wildfire season.
- Identify hazards: Know the common environmental risks in your area, such as flood zones or wildfire-prone areas.
- Practice makes perfect: Regularly practice evacuation routes and safety procedures with your family or team. Stay apprised of local and state emergency plans.
- Report hazards: If you spot potential environmental hazards, report them to the appropriate local authority.

Environmental safety involves preparing for and protecting workers and each other from natural hazards and climate exposure. In Oregon, this includes wildfires, floods, earthquakes, and extreme temperatures. Environmental safety principles emphasize preparedness, education, and sustainable practices to reduce the impact of hazards.

## Heat



High temperatures are becoming more common and can be hazardous to anyone exposed to them. People working in environments where the heat index exceeds 80°F must have access to shade, cool drinking water, and rest breaks. When temperatures reach 90°F or higher, stricter measures, such as more frequent breaks and effective communication with supervisors, are necessary to prevent heat-related illnesses. Find more information on SAIF's Protect your team from heat illness handout ([saif.com/S1211](https://saif.com/S1211)).

## Wildfire smoke



Wildfire smoke poses significant health risks, especially during dry seasons when air quality can worsen rapidly. Employers must monitor air quality levels, particularly when the air quality index (AQI) exceeds 101, signaling unhealthy conditions. Provide N95 respirators and train workers to recognize and address smoke inhalation symptoms. Find more information on SAIF's Prepare your business for wildfire season handout ([saif.com/S1072](https://saif.com/S1072)).

## Disaster preparedness



Many disasters can impact Oregon workplaces, threatening workers and the public. Some of these can include wind, snow, or ice storms, tsunamis, and earthquakes. Taking time to plan for these possibilities can reduce injury risk, as well as property loss. The first step is to create a robust plan for emergencies. While Oregon OSHA requires an emergency action plan for businesses, the National Fire Protective Association also has a consensus standard NFPA 101, the Life Safety Code, that can be helpful to businesses. The standard is available without charge on their website, although you do have to create an account. Find out more on Oregon OSHA's emergency action plan page ([bit.ly/4iTywbL](https://bit.ly/4iTywbL)).

## Summary

Environmental safety protections are essential to protecting health at work and at home. These measures can improve productivity and reduce workplace injuries, ensuring a safer, more resilient workforce in the face of increasing environmental hazards.

## Cold



Cold exposure is another concern, particularly in regions where workers may be exposed to freezing temperatures outside or by working in inside freezers for extended periods. Employers must provide appropriate clothing, heating sources, and regular breaks in these conditions. Find more information on the NIOSH Fast facts, protecting yourself from cold stress quick card ([bit.ly/4cfy4lv](https://bit.ly/4cfy4lv)).

### For more info:

- See SAIF's emergency planning and response webpage ([saif.com/emergencyresponse](https://saif.com/emergencyresponse)).
- Visit [ready.gov](https://ready.gov) or Prepare, Respond and Stay Informed | Oregon Health Authority ([bit.ly/42unm7m](https://bit.ly/42unm7m)) for other disaster preparedness tips.
- Find local resources within your city and county.

## ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Disaster preparedness scavenger hunt: Organize the scavenger hunt focused on identifying potential hazards such as poorly maintained structures, areas prone to flooding, or walkways that could be impacted by snow. Teams document these hazards with photos and suggest improvements. Afterward, they present their findings highlighting the importance of awareness and preparedness in environmental safety.
- Interactive workshop: Conduct a hands-on workshop where participants learn and practice emergency procedures, such as how to use a fire extinguisher, perform basic first aid for heat exhaustion and physical injuries, safely evacuate during a wildfire, or shelter-in-place during an earthquake. After the demonstration, participants practice these skills in small groups, ensuring they are prepared to respond to environmental hazards.
- Review emergency action plan: Ensure your emergency action plan addresses all potential hazards. If you aren't sure what you are missing, review the requirements in Oregon OSHA's Expecting the Unexpected: What to consider in planning for workplace emergencies ([bit.ly/3RyB7LW](https://bit.ly/3RyB7LW)).
- Practice looking up the current heat index using the OSHA heat safety tool ([bit.ly/3DPU21S](https://bit.ly/3DPU21S)). Also practice looking up the current air quality in your area using AirNow ([www.airnow.gov](https://www.airnow.gov)) or the AirCare app ([getaircare.com](https://getaircare.com)).