



# Real-Time Risk



## TIMELY NEWS AND TIPS TO HELP REDUCE RISK

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# CONFRONTING DISASTERS WITH READINESS

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Over the past few years, our great state has seen increased climate change and disaster-related events associated with drought, wildfires, flooding, and abnormal snow events. September is National Preparedness Month. We hope to draw awareness of the need to provide necessary emergency-related training and resources for your teams to support their readiness during a crisis, especially when disasters or emergencies can happen without notice.

## Training

Right now, it's easy to dismiss emergency preparedness when staffing shortages throughout local government are at an all-time high. Although it's because of these shortages, a greater emphasis should be placed on readiness/preparation should disaster strike, and we find ourselves most vulnerable trying to offer response and recovery. Every team member can make a difference during times of disaster or emergency. According to FEMA, all Federal, State, territorial, tribal, private sector, and nongovernmental personnel at the following levels of responsibility in emergency management operations should take an Introduction to Incident Command Systems (ICS) 100. This includes first-line supervisors (sergeant/lieutenant), mid-level management (captain/shift commander), and command (battalion chief/division chief/district commander/pio) and general staff (operations/planning/logistics/finance-admin).

To obtain the ICS-100 course materials or take the course online, [visit this link](#). For all personnel with a direct role in emergency preparedness, incident management, or response and serving at the executive, managerial, or responder

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level, the National Incident Management (NIMS) IS-700 should be taken. To obtain the NIMS IS-700 course materials or take the course online, [visit this link](#). Of note, many state/federal emergency grants have application requirements for ICS and NIMS training to meet compliance.

## Worker Safety

It's crucial to provide workers responding to incidents with the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) needed for the duties performed. There may be times when utilizing workers from other departments to support emergency efforts might also be necessary. As a part of cross-training and before staff are sent out to work, consider the level of hazards faced and provide training first on any equipment or tools they will be working with, document the training has occurred, and ensure the proper equipment is provided while maintained in good working order. Consider what type of footwear, gloves, eyewear, attire, and use of specialized equipment/gear might be necessary, such as respirators for wildfire smoke exposure. And finally, prepare for the unexpected by keeping an [Emergency Evacuation Kit \(Go Bag\)](#) in each fleet vehicle for response.

## Newly Adopted Wildfire Smoke Rules

Effective July 1, 2022, OR-OSHA Adopted Permanent Rules to address employee exposure to wildfire smoke. [Read the full text of the wildfire smoke rule](#).

## What the Wildfire Exposure Rule Does...

### Air Quality Index:

- Applies to employers whose employees are — or will be — exposed to wildfire smoke where the ambient air concentration for fine particulate matter equals or exceeds an Air Quality Index (AQI) 101 for particulate matter (PM) 2.5.
- At AQI 101, the rule requires employers to provide a National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH) approved filtering facepiece respirator, such as a N95, to all exposed employees for voluntary use.
- Quickly determine the AQI in your area by using the resource [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov).

### Respirator Use:

- Requires employers to ensure employees wear NIOSH-approved respirators at or above AQI 251 and follow Appendix A instead of the full respiratory program. Appendix A does not require medical evaluations and fit testing.
- Requires employers to ensure employees wear NIOSH-approved respirators at or above AQI 501 and follow medical monitoring, fit testing, and other elements of the Respiratory Protection Standard.

## Era of Megafires: Prevention and Mitigation

If you happened to miss the 2022 CIS Annual Conference, Eric Holdeman presented the Era of Megafires: Prevention and Mitigation. A recording of this session is available on the [CIS Learning Center](#).

It was an excellent session, highlighting many resources on wildfire management. Eric has also authored a worthy must-read book titled *The Red Guide to Recovery, A Handbook for Disaster Survivors*.

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## Employer Required Training/Controls:

- Requires exposure monitoring and training. The CIS Learning Center provides access to the [OR-OSHA Wildfire Smoke Training](#) course and is designed to satisfy 5 of the 10 training requirements found in OR-OSHA's rules to address exposure to wildfire smoke (OA 437-002-1081 General Industry and 437-004-9791 Agriculture).
- Training must be conducted annually and include potential acute and chronic health effects from wildfire smoke exposure.
- Requires implementation of communications to relay information before employees are exposed.
- Requires use of engineering and administrative controls, including relocating outdoor workers to enclosed buildings where air can be adequately filtered and relocating work or making work schedule changes to achieve better air quality.
- There are several exceptions to the rule identified within [the full text](#).

For more information on adopted Wildfire Smoke Rules, visit the OR-OSHA website [osha.oregon.gov/rules](https://osha.oregon.gov/rules). For questions regarding the rule, contact Tom Bozicevic at the Salem Central Office at (503) 378-3272 or email Tom. [bozicevic@dcbs.orego.gov](mailto:bozicevic@dcbs.orego.gov).

## Disaster Readiness Resources

CIS has worked hard to develop many resources to help you prepare for and respond to disasters and emergencies. We created the [CIS Disaster Recovery Kit](#) to identify the necessary items and links to relevant documents needed to restore of public services. The recently updated [Risk Resource Library](#) (under the Emergency/Continuity of Operations category) includes resources on managing spontaneous volunteers/donations, shelter management, and communicating in crisis for public officials.

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Additional information can be found on the State's continuity of operation plans (COOP) [Software-as-a-Service program](#) — a free tool offered to local government for purposes of updating your COOP. There's also a page on the website dedicated to [wildfire resources](#).

The Oregon Department of Emergency Management's website offers more information and resources on individual, business, and community preparedness, as well as [Ready.gov](#) for personal/family/pet emergency preparedness checklists.

It's recommended in Oregon to be 2-weeks ready — you need enough food and water for yourself, family, pets, and livestock for two weeks. Please get in touch with your local emergency manager. If you are interested in learning more about how you can support your neighborhood and community as a community emergency response team ([CERTS](#)) member. We need CERTS teams in our communities to offer basic skills in medical triage, fire suppression, and search and rescue until first responders can arrive. The course is free, and the time commitment varies depending upon the training provider.

As a reminder, we are no longer utilizing Agility Recovery as of Aug. 1, 2022. Our claims staff will now assist with identifying vendors who handle facility restoration/replacement and debris removal options.

If you haven't heard of the non-profit organization [Team Rubicon](#), they are a volunteer organization utilizing military veterans in the U.S. to aid with response planning, social media/virtual operation support teams (VOST), crisis management support, medical station support, and logistics, testing location supports, and coordination/execution of food delivery services. Many skills provided by the military make these volunteers unique in their ability to assist and support disaster events. Their team has worked in



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Oregon previously — one such project was the deployment of sawyers to clean up downed trees after the 2020 McKenzie Fire. According to an organization representative, their volunteer labor for disaster response activities can also be used as an allowable post-recovery cost for FEMA grants.

FEMA provides 75% funding for some emergency protective measures and some community disaster assistance. You must track 100% of disaster response-related expenses. But be aware that not all costs will be eligible under the Public Assistance program. Your designated emergency manager will be the best point of contact for additional questions regarding the FEMA grant process. The primary contact for Team Rubicon in Oregon is Kimber Townsend at [kimberly.townsend@teamrubiconusa.org](mailto:kimberly.townsend@teamrubiconusa.org).

At CIS, we work together to help Oregon's cities and counties to be safer, stronger, and healthier. By providing the disaster/emergency resources and training recommendations made within this article, we hope we help you to be more effective in how you prepare, respond, and recover during difficult times.

