

What to do if a worker becomes ill due to wildfire smoke exposure



This publication explains what workers should do if they believe they've become ill due to exposure to wildfire smoke in the workplace.

Workers who believe their health has been impacted by exposure to wildfire smoke in the workplace should have a medical evaluation. Workers should go to a health care provider of their choice, or if necessary to an emergency room, for a medical evaluation and explain they were exposed to wildfire smoke while at work. The health care provider may help them file a claim.

Instructions for filing a claim are available at www.Lni.wa.gov/claims/for-workers/file-a-claim or by calling 1-877-561-FILE. Those who work for a self-insured employer should file claims directly with them: www.Lni.wa.gov/insurance/self-insurance/look-up-self-insured-employers-tpas/find-a-self-insured-employer.

For claims filed for exposure to wildfire smoke, L&I or the self-insured employer will evaluate the individual circumstances to make a decision. The criteria for claim allowance depend on whether the medical condition is determined to be an occupational injury or occupational disease. L&I or the self-insured employer can approve claims if the medical provider certifies that the worker was either injured at work or has an occupational disease caused by workplace exposure. If the claim is allowed, benefits cover the payment of medical bills and may also include replacement of a portion of lost wages, return-to-work help or a pension for a severely-injured person who cannot go back to work.

Claims may be denied if the medical provider cannot certify the medical condition is related to work. However, even if a claim is denied, the first medical visit is paid by L&I or the self-insured employer. An injury claim must be filed within one year from the injury. An occupational disease claim must be filed within two years of notice from a doctor that the condition is work-related.

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