

# **Utilizing Respiratory Protection to Help Reduce Exposures to Ambient Air Pollution**

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High levels of air pollution, haze and smoke from fires are a concern in many countries. This has resulted in a recent increased interest in the use of respiratory protection to help reduce exposures to airborne particulates. Employers are interested in providing respiratory protection to their employees who may have to work outside during high levels of air pollution and haze. Certain multinational employers have also expressed an interest in providing respiratory protection to employees and their families residing in affected areas. Additionally, the use of respiratory protection by the general public has generated much interest, including from governments, and occasional media attention. This newer application of respiratory protection raises many questions including at what AQI is respiratory protection appropriate? Will wearing a respirator during certain time periods make a health or productivity difference overall? How are the needs of the young, elderly and sick addressed? Are masks better than nothing? These and other questions will be addressed along with an overview of recommendations and guidelines offered by governmental and nongovernmental agencies around the world.