

Published on *CHCOC* (<https://chcoc.gov>)

[Home](#) > Dangerous Air Quality Conditions Due to Canadian Wildfires

Dangerous Air Quality Conditions Due to Canadian Wildfires

Thursday, June 8, 2023

CPM 2023-09

MEMORANDUM FOR:
CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICERS

From:

Kiran A. Ahuja, Director, U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Subject:

Dangerous Air Quality Conditions Due to Canadian Wildfires

As much of the country experiences dangerous air quality conditions from the ongoing Canadian wildfires, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is reminding Federal agencies to be proactive in protecting the health and wellbeing of our Federal workforce. In particular, we strongly encourage agencies to take all available steps to help protect those employees with high-risk medical conditions when dangerous air quality conditions are present. Employees are strongly encouraged to monitor their local air quality index levels through the [AirNow](#) website.

OPM would also like to remind agencies of the various workplace flexibilities that may be used to reduce health risks associated with dangerous air quality levels. Agencies are encouraged to permit employees, particularly those with high-risk medical conditions, to telework from home on a day when air quality conditions are dangerous. Additionally, if permitted by agency policy, an employee working a flexible work schedule may choose to adjust arrival and departure times to avoid commuting during hours when the air quality may be worse. Employees may also request the use of annual leave, earned compensatory time off, or credit hours on a day when the air quality is threatening to an employee's health and welfare. The following links provide additional information on available workplace flexibilities:

- [Telework](#)
- [Work Schedules](#)
- [Leave](#)

Any decision to change the operating status of a Federal office or facility due to dangerous air quality conditions should be made consistent with the operating status announcements and guidance found in OPM's [Governmentwide Dismissal and Closure Procedures](#). This includes the proper application of weather and safety leave, unscheduled telework, and unscheduled leave for employees. Please note that OPM issues operating status announcements that apply only to those employees working in Executive agencies with offices located inside the "Washington Capital Beltway" (i.e. the Washington, DC area). Employees working in Federal agency offices located outside of the Washington Capital Beltway must follow operating status announcements issued by their agency. The current Washington, DC area operating status can be found on OPM's [website](#) or by downloading the [OPM Alert Mobile App](#).

Finally, OPM wants to make the Federal community aware of the resources available from various Federal health authorities that provide information and advice on the best ways to cope with dangerous air quality conditions to protect ourselves and our families. The following links to official Federal Government information may be helpful:

- The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) [AirNow Fire and Smoke Map](#) which gives the public information on fire locations, smoke plumes, near real-time air quality and actions to take to protect

your health all in one place.

- The EPA's [AirNow app](#), available for free on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store, can be used to check the AirNow Fire and Smoke Map by tapping the Smoke icon in the app.
- EPA's [AirNow guidance](#) on ways to reduce exposure when smoke is in the air.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance on [air quality](#) and [wildfire smoke](#).
- The Department of Health and Human Service's Office of Climate Change and Health Equity guidance on the current [wildfire outlook](#).

Additional Information

For additional information, agency headquarters-level human resources offices may contact OPM at pay-leave-policy@opm.gov. Component-level human resources offices must contact their agency headquarters for assistance. Employees must contact their agency human resources office for further information on this memorandum.

cc: Deputy Chief Human Capital Officers and Human Resources Directors