



October, 2007\*

## Wildfire Cleanup

If the general public makes a personal decision to use respirators against the soot and ash particles that result from wildfires, 3M recommends that a government-certified particulate respirator (e.g. N95, N99, N100, etc.) should be used to help reduce wearer exposure to these particles. These respirators are available from many sources including large home center stores, paint stores, hardware stores, safety suppliers, and industrial supply houses.

At this time, there has not been a formal recommendation by any government agency, such as the Centers For Disease Control And Prevention (CDC) or the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), recommending the need for respiratory protection for the general population. The CDC has, however, published a fact sheet titled “*Wildfires: Health Threat from Wildfire Smoke*” which provides information on how to protect your health during a wildfire emergency. The fact sheet, dated April 19, 2007, can be accessed at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/wildfires/facts.asp>.

Particulate respirators do not filter carbon monoxide (CO), formaldehyde, or other gaseous combustion products that may be present during a wild land fire. Particulate respirators are not intended for firefighting, escape or for protecting the wearer in situations where unknown contaminants may be present.

Anyone seeking guidance on this issue should consult with their state health authority before selecting any respiratory protective equipment.

### **Information on the proper use of respirators:**

Proper use of respirators is not a guarantee that the user will not contract an illness. There are several considerations which individuals should be aware of when using respirators, such as:

- Individuals with a compromised respiratory system, such as asthma or emphysema or those with a history of heart disease, should consult a physician before wearing a respirator. If you experience dizziness, irritation or other distress while wearing a respirator, go to a clean area and remove your respirator. Consult your doctor to determine whether or not you should continue use of the respirator.
- Respirators may help reduce exposure to airborne contaminants, but they don't eliminate the risk of exposure, infection, illness, or death.
- For greatest effectiveness respirators need to be worn before and during the entire exposure period.
- Fit of the respirator to the face is very important. Following the fitting instructions provided with the respirator is important to help you reduce your exposure to soot and ash. If it does not fit properly, airborne contaminants will penetrate (enter underneath) the facepiece seal.
- 3M respirators are not designed for children. 3M respirators are designed for occupational/professional use by adults who are properly trained in their use and limitations.
- Anything that comes between the respirator and your face will make the respirator less effective by interfering with its fit. Men should shave every day that they may use the respirator. Hair, jewelry and clothing should not be between your face and the respirator.
- Understanding proper use and limitations of the respirator you select, including practice putting the respirator on and wearing it is recommended.

\*This fact sheet was first published in October 2003.