

TAILGATE SAFETY MEETING

provided by State Compensation Insurance Fund



Job Name: _____
Job Site Location: _____
Supervisor/Foreman: _____

Date: ____/____/____
Start Time: ____ AM/PM
End Time: ____ AM/PM

Protection from Valley Fever

What is Valley Fever?

Valley Fever is caused by a microscopic fungus known as *Coccidioides immitis* which lives in the top two to 12 inches of soil in many parts of the state. When soil is disturbed by activities such as digging, driving, or high winds, fungal spores can become airborne and potentially be inhaled by workers. Populations with more than 20 cases annually of Valley Fever per 100,000 people are considered highly endemic.

While the fungal spores are more likely to be present in the soils of the Central Valley, they may also be present in other areas of California.

This map shows the areas with the greatest incidence of reported human Valley Fever cases.



California map that highlights of highly endemic counties: Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Luis Obispo, Tulare with incidence rates of 75 to 304 cases per 100,000 people.

map source: CDPH Valley Fever Fact Sheet

How can Valley Fever Be Prevented?

While there is no vaccine to prevent Valley Fever, the following steps are important to take in order to limit risk:

- Determine if your worksite is in an endemic area.
- Adopt site plans and work practices that reduce workers' exposure, which may include:
 - Minimize the area of soil disturbed.
 - Use water, appropriate soil stabilizers, and/or re-vegetation to reduce airborne dust
 - Stabilize all spoils piles by tarping or other methods.

- Provide air conditioned cabs for vehicles that generate heavy dust and make sure workers keep windows and vents closed.
- Suspend work during heavy winds.
- Onsite sleeping quarters, if provided, should be placed away from sources of dust.

- When exposure to dust is unavoidable, provide NIOSH-approved respiratory protection with particulate filters rated as N95, N99, N100, P100, or HEPA. Employers must develop and implement a respiratory protection program in accordance with Cal/OSHA's Respiratory Protection standard (8 CCR 5144).
- Take measures to reduce transporting spores offsite, such as:
 - Clean tools, equipment, and vehicles before transporting offsite.
 - If workers' clothing is likely to be heavily contaminated with dust, provide coveralls and change rooms, and showers where possible.
- Identify a health care provider for occupational injuries and illnesses who is knowledgeable about the diagnosis and treatment of Valley Fever
- Train workers and supervisors about the risk of Valley Fever, the work activities that may increase the risk, and the measures used onsite to reduce exposure. Also train on how to recognize Valley Fever symptoms.
- Encourage workers to report Valley Fever symptoms promptly to a supervisor. Not associating these symptoms with workplace exposures can lead to a delay in appropriate diagnosis and treatment.

What work activities increase the risk of Valley Fever?

When fungal spores are present, any work activity that disturbs the soil, such as digging, grading or other earth moving operations, or vehicle operation on dirt roads, can cause the spores to become airborne, therefore increasing the risk of Valley Fever. All workers on sites where the fungus is present, and who are exposed to dusty conditions and wind-blown dusts are at increased risk of becoming infected.

- Construction workers and other workers on construction sites, including road building and excavation crews
- Archeologists
- Geologists
- Wildland firefighters
- Military personnel
- Workers in mining, quarrying, gas and oil extraction jobs
- Agricultural workers*

Work-Site Hazards and Safety Suggestions: _____

Personal Safety Violations: _____

Material Safety Data Sheets Reviewed: _____

Employee Signatures: (My signature attests and verifies my understanding of/and agreement to comply with, all company safety policies and regulations, and that I have not suffered, experienced, or sustained any recent job-related injury or illness.)

The above evaluations and/or recommendations are for general guidance only and should not be relied upon for legal compliance purposes. They are based solely on the information provided to us and relate only to those conditions specifically discussed. We do not make any warranty, expressed or implied, that your workplace is safe or healthful or that it complies with all laws, regulations or standards.

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What should employers do if a worker reports Valley Fever symptoms?

- Report all hospitalized cases and deaths to Cal/OSHA.
- Complete the "Employer's Report of Occupational Injury or Illness" (Form 5020) for each suspected occupational Valley Fever illness.
- Send the worker to a workers' compensation healthcare provider or occupational medicine clinic whose staff is knowledgeable about Valley Fever. Alert the provider or clinic to the possibility that the employee was exposed to dusts that may contain coccidioides spores. Physicians must submit a "Doctor's First Report of Occupational Injury or Illness" (Form 5021) for each employee evaluated for occupational Valley Fever.
- Record all cases on the Cal/OSHA Log 300.

*Cultivated, irrigated soil may be less likely to contain the fungus compared to undisturbed soils.

Article accessed at: <http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/valley-fever-home.html>

Information for Employers

- **Employers have a legal responsibility to immediately report to Cal/OSHA any serious injury or illness, or death (including any due to Valley Fever) of an employee occurring in a place of employment or in connection with any employment. Employers also have responsibilities to control workers' exposure to hazardous materials.**
- Applicable regulations with regard to Valley Fever protection and exposure can be found in the California Code of Regulations, Title 8, sections
 - [342](#) (Reporting Work-Connected Fatalities and Serious Injuries),
 - [3203](#) (Injury and Illness Prevention),
 - [5141](#) (Control of Harmful Exposures),
 - [5144](#) (Respiratory Protection) and
 - [14300](#) (Employer Records-Log 300).

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