




TEMPORARY DIRECTIVE

SUBJECT: Respiratory Protection for Valley Fever	DATE ISSUED: February 11, 2025
APPROVING AUTHORITY: Matthew Sully, Deputy Director of Cooperative Fire Protection	ORIGINAL EXPIRES: August 11, 2025
SIGNATURE: 	EXTENSION EXPIRES:
REFERENCES: Safety Handbook 1729	ISSUING PROGRAM: Safety Program

DISTRIBUTION: All CAL FIRE Employees

PURPOSE: New requirements for the use of respiratory protection to protect against Valley Fever

BACKGROUND: As required under California Code of Regulations, Title 8 Safety Orders, respiratory protection is required to be provided to employees in certain situations, including when exposed to hazards such as Valley Fever.

Coccidiomycosis, or “cocci” for short, is a naturally occurring fungus that when inhaled with dust particles can result in a clinical condition called Valley Fever. The fungal spores exist in several geographic locations in the United States, including much of California. Wildland firefighters in California, including several CAL FIRE employees, have experienced an increase in clinical illness from this infection leading to several hospitalizations and prolonged illness from this disease. The most common presentation of infection is a respiratory illness often resulting in diagnosis of ‘pneumonia’ based on clinical symptoms including cough, fever, night sweats severe fatigue, chest pain and joint pain typically occurring 1 to 3 weeks after exposure.

TEMPORARY POLICY AND/OR PROCEDURE:

Effective immediately, when employees are assigned to fire investigation duties within an area where soils are known to carry Coccidioidomycosis fungal (Valley Fever) spores, and the employees will be disturbing the soils or the wind velocity reaches a speed of 10 mph or greater, employees will be [Temporary Directives shall be effective for up to six-months, with possible renewal of an additional six-months. Temporary Directives that are not incorporated into a permanent policy or procedure within 12 months of issuance shall require Deputy Director or above approval for further renewal.](#)



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required to utilize and wear N95 or greater respiratory protection. Respirators shall only be used by employees when it is safe and feasible to do so, without compromising emergency operations.

During all other duties and assignments, all employees and supervisors should strongly consider precautions against Valley Fever when they:

- Can reasonably be anticipated to be exposed to substantial dust disturbance, especially in late summer and fall.
- Are working in endemic counties (Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Monterey, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Tulare, and Ventura)

Actions to take to minimize dust exposure and prevent Valley Fever include:

- Wear a well-fitted NIOSH-approved respirator, such as an N95 or greater (respirators shall be provided for voluntary use anytime exposure is reasonably anticipated).
- When working near soil disturbance, position yourself upwind to reduce inhaled dust.
- When possible, wet soil before disturbing it with heavy equipment or vehicles.
- Set up camps and rest areas away from areas like roadways and helipads.
- Remove dusty clothing and shoes before entering sleeping or living quarters.
- When possible, stay inside enclosed, air-conditioned vehicle cabs.
- Remove soil from tools and vehicles with water before transporting them off-site.
- Avoid soil-disturbing activities during windy days.

All these mitigations should be taken when safe, feasible, and without compromising emergency operations.

OTHER HANDBOOK(S) AFFECTED: None

HANDBOOK OWNER: Jeremy Lawson, Staff Chief of Safety and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Programs

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