

**Focus on...**

## Construction/Outdoor Workers at Risk for Valley Fever

Ten members of a 12-person construction crew excavating a trench developed Valley Fever (coccidioidomycosis or “cocci”), an illness with pneumonia and flu-like symptoms. Seven had abnormal chest x-rays, four had rashes, and one had an infection that spread beyond his lungs. The 10 ill crew members missed at least 1660 hours of work; two of the workers were on disability for months.

Over 1000 Californians seek hospital care for Valley Fever every year. About eight of every 100 of those hospitalized die from this infection. Yet workplace health and safety plans often do not even mention Valley Fever, despite the fact that it can be disabling or fatal.



**Photo: Construction and other workers who disturb soil are at risk**

The cocci fungus lives in the soil in parts of California, particularly the Central Valley. When people inhale the fungal spores released when the soil is disturbed, they may get this illness.

Workers who disturb soil containing the *Coccidioides immitis* fungus by digging, driving, or working in dusty, wind-blown areas are at risk for getting Valley Fever. Wildland firefighters, construction workers, archaeologists, military personnel, workers in mining, gas and oil extraction jobs, and other outdoor workers are at higher risk. Workers can be protected against this disease by the use of dust control measures and appropriate personal protective equipment.

The Occupational Health Branch (OHB) has a new [web page](#) to better explain to employers and workers how to prevent getting the illness.

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### Resources

- [Workers and Valley Fever](#) - Web page
- [Preventing Work-Related Valley Fever](#) - Fact sheet
- [Wildland Firefighters](#) - Tailgate training on prevention

OHB improves California worker health and safety through prevention activities. We gather information on job hazards, test new approaches to prevent worker injury and illness, and help make changes at the workplace.

Email [OHW@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:OHW@cdph.ca.gov) with feedback about this update or change of address.