



Valley Fever:

Tailgate Training Guide For California Construction Workers

June 2025, Version 2

Valley Fever

Tailgate Training Guide For California Construction Workers

1. About This Guide

This guide will help you train workers on Valley fever. It covers the 8 topics required for construction worker Valley fever training under [California Labor Code Section 6709](http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=LAB§ionNum=6709). ([leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=LAB§ionNum=6709](http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=LAB§ionNum=6709))

This training is required for employees working in 12 counties where work activities disturb the soil. These counties have the highest rates of Valley fever: Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Monterey, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Stanislaus, Tulare, and Ventura. Other counties may be added to this list, depending on Valley fever rates in future years.

You can use this guide with the [“Preventing Work-Related Valley Fever” fact sheet \(2013\)](http://Go.cdph.ca.gov/VfWorkFacts) (Go.cdph.ca.gov/VfWorkFacts). ***Instructions for trainers using this guide are in bold italics.*** Answers to questions are in the shaded boxes.

2. Introduction

Say: Today we are going to talk about Valley fever, which is a known hazard for construction workers in certain parts of California. We are doing Valley fever training because you may work in one of the 12 counties with the highest rates of this illness. This training is also required by law.

Ask: What do you all already know about Valley fever?

Let workers respond and then read:

Valley fever is an illness that usually affects the lungs. It is caused by a fungus that lives in the soil in many parts of California.

- ☐ When the soil is disturbed by digging, vehicles, or wind, the fungus spores get into the air. Spores are like tiny seeds that are too small to see.
- ☐ People can breathe the spores into their lungs and get Valley fever. Valley fever affects people differently. While many people who get Valley fever have no symptoms or only very mild ones, others can get very sick or even die.
- ☐ Valley fever is not a contagious disease - it cannot be spread from person to person. It is almost always caused by breathing in the fungus from dust in the air.

3. Valley Fever Symptoms

Ask: What are some symptoms of Valley fever?

Let workers respond; acknowledge correct answers, then say:

More than half of people (about 60%) infected with Valley fever have no symptoms, and their bodies will fight off the infection naturally. People who get sick usually develop symptoms one to three weeks after breathing in the fungus. Valley fever usually infects the lungs, and some people can develop respiratory symptoms or pneumonia. Common Valley fever symptoms can be mistaken for a cold, influenza, COVID-19 or pneumonia, but last longer than one week. They include:

| | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Fatigue (tiredness) | Night sweats | Weight loss |
| Cough | Muscle or joint pain | Headache |
| Difficulty breathing | Chest pain | Rash |
| Fever | | |

Ask: How long do Valley fever symptoms last?

Say:

Valley fever can affect people in different ways. Some people with Valley fever may only have mild symptoms that get better on their own within a few weeks. However, some symptoms, especially fatigue, can take longer to go away and can last for several months.

In rare cases, Valley fever can cause severe infections in the lungs or in other parts of the body. This more severe form of Valley fever can cause infections in the skin, bones, joints, or brain. People with severe Valley fever may need to be hospitalized, and they will likely need follow-up medical care from a doctor for several months or even years. In very rare instances, severe Valley fever can be fatal.

4. Valley Fever Risk

Ask: Who can get sick?

Let workers respond; acknowledge correct answers, then say:

Anyone can get Valley fever, even healthy adults and children. Living, working, and even driving around outside in dust in Valley fever areas can put you at risk. You're at higher risk if you disturb the soil by digging or operating earth-moving equipment, work or stand close to these activities, or if you work in dusty, wind-blown areas.

Ask: Are any people more likely to get sick with Valley fever?

Let workers respond, then say:

Some people have a higher risk of getting very sick if they get Valley fever. These include:

- ☐ Older adults (60 years and older), pregnant women, and people with diabetes.
- ☐ Certain racial/ethnic groups: African Americans and Filipinos.
- ☐ People with health conditions that weaken your immune system such as cancer, HIV, autoimmune illnesses, chemotherapy or steroids treatment, and organ transplants.

5. Valley Fever Treatment & Outcomes

Ask: How is Valley fever diagnosed and treated?

Let workers respond, then say:

Valley fever can be diagnosed with a blood test or other laboratory test. Although specific medications called “antifungals” are available to treat fungal infections like Valley fever, not everyone needs this kind of treatment.

- ☐ It is very important that you report symptoms that might be Valley fever as soon as you suspect it, so that a doctor familiar with Valley fever can evaluate you, confirm if it is Valley fever, and determine if you need treatment.
- ☐ Be sure to tell your doctor if, in the month before you got sick, you were in an area where Valley fever has been reported and if you were exposed to dirt or dust in that area, for example if you were on a worksite where digging was occurring, or if you were outdoors during a dust storm.
- ☐ Your doctor will consider a number of factors when deciding if you need testing, treatment, or neither.
- ☐ Some people with Valley fever get better without treatment because their bodies will fight off the infection naturally.
- ☐ Antifungal medications used to treat Valley fever are usually given to people who may need to take them for months or even years because of severe disease. Not everyone with Valley fever needs to take these medications.

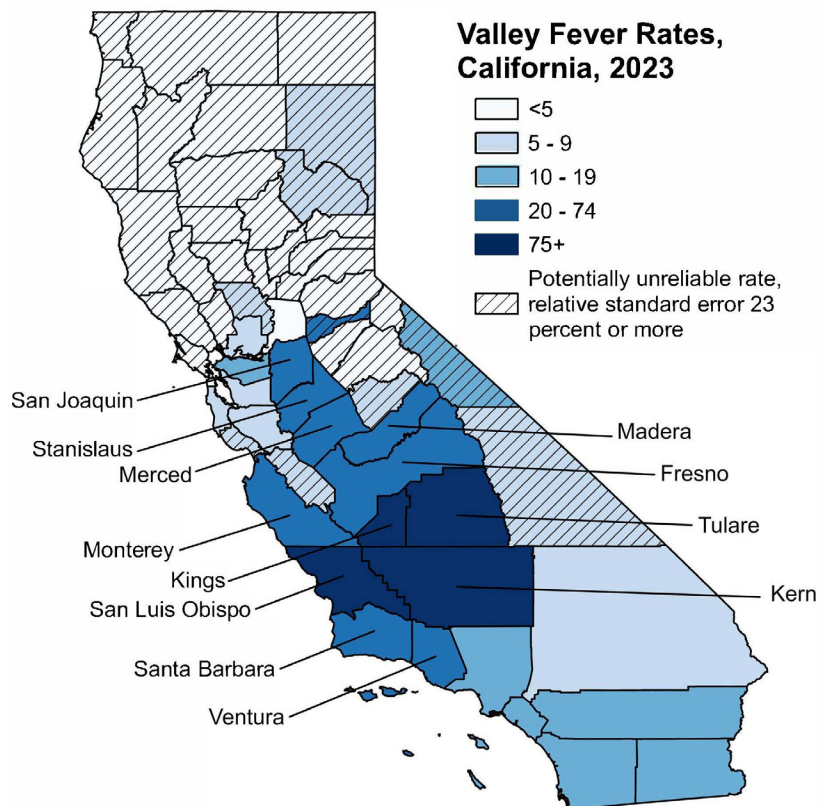
6. Where The Fungus May Be Present

Ask: How do you know if the fungus is present in the soil?

Let workers respond, then say:

Fungus in the soil is too small to see. There is no reliable way to test the dirt around a worksite for Valley fever. But we know that in California, Valley fever is most common in the Central Valley and Central Coast. This information is based on reports that the health department gets about patients who have Valley fever. Since we can't know exactly where the Valley fever fungus is present in the soil, best practice is to prevent dust from getting in the air on all jobsites.

This map shows where people who had Valley fever lived, not where they worked.



Rates of Valley fever cases reported per 100,000 population. Darkest colored counties had the highest rates of Valley fever.

7. Control Measures

Ask: What are some things we can do to prevent worker exposure to the Valley fever fungus?

Let workers respond; acknowledge correct answers, then say:

- ☐ Use enough water on open dirt areas to keep dust down.
- ☐ Keep the soil wet before, during, and after disturbing it. When soil will be disturbed by heavy equipment or vehicles, or by manual digging, wet the soil beforehand.
- ☐ Avoid work during dust storms or high winds.
- ☐ Stay upwind of digging and other dust-producing activities, such as dumping soil, drilling, or blasting.
- ☐ Heavy equipment should have enclosed cabs, air conditioning, and filters that clean the air coming in. Operators should have a way to communicate without opening windows.
- ☐ Use water to clean dusty equipment whenever you can.
- ☐ Keep dust away from your food and drinks: Always wash up before you take a break or eat lunch. If possible, also take dusty clothes off.
- ☐ Change into clean clothes and shoes before leaving a dusty job site. Keep dusty clothes and shoes in a plastic bag.
- ☐ Shower and wash your hair at work or as soon as you get home.
- ☐ If controlling dust is not possible, workers should be protected by respirators with particulate filters under a respirator program. Bandanas and simple dust masks are not protective against Valley fever.*

** See Resources on Page 10 for more info on respirator programs.*

8. At Your Jobsite (If Applicable)

It's important for employees to know what protections should be in place so they can speak up if things don't go the way they are supposed to. Fill in the following items before you do the training.

Say: On this job the things we'll do to protect you from Valley fever are:

- ☐ Using water trucks (describe where and how often they will go by):

- ☐ Using water hoses when digging (describe how they will be used):

- ☐ Workers will need to wear a respirator for these tasks:

- ☐ Include other controls specific to your jobsite:

Say: It is important to keep workers safe. If anyone sees dust that is not being controlled, let _____ know right away.

(Fill in name and number of supervisor in charge of dust control).

9. Practice Scenario

Say: It's a hot, windy day at a new housing development. A trenching crew is installing a sewer main while a surveyor measures the location of property lines next to them. The trenching crew was trained on Valley fever prior to beginning excavation. The surveyor was not trained. Before digging, the laborers in the trenching crew put on their respirators and the heavy equipment operator confirmed with the foreman that his cab had clean HEPA filters. During the excavation, no water was used for dust suppression. The surveyor, who was downwind, was bothered by the dust. She shouted for the digging to stop until the wind died down but could not be heard, so she kept working.

Ask: What went right in this scenario?

Let workers respond; acknowledge correct answers, then say:

- ☐ The trenching crew was trained on Valley fever prevention.
- ☐ The crew had respirators.
- ☐ The heavy equipment operator was in an enclosed cab with clean HEPA filters.
- ☐ The surveyor tried to speak up about the dust.

Ask: What could have been done to prevent the surveyor from possible exposure to Valley fever?

Let workers respond; acknowledge correct answers, then say:

- ☐ EVERYONE in a dusty area should be trained on Valley fever before working.
- ☐ Water should be used to keep dust down.
- ☐ The work should have been postponed until it was less windy.
- ☐ The supervisor should have made sure no one was downwind.
- ☐ The surveyor should have been included in the respirator program so she would be able to wear a respirator.

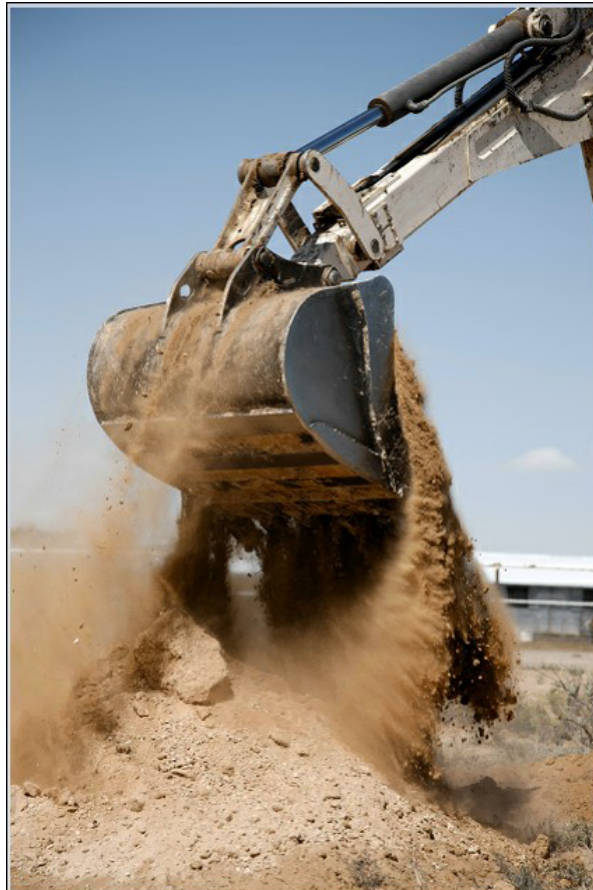
10. Worker Actions

Ask: What can workers do if they are concerned about Valley fever?

Let workers respond; acknowledge correct answers, then say:

There are a few important things you as workers can do:

- ☐ Talk with your supervisor, safety manager, or union representative if you have any concerns about dust control, respiratory protection, or other health or safety issues.
- ☐ If you have symptoms that may be Valley fever, ask to see an occupational health doctor under workers' compensation. Tell the doctor where you work and what you do.



Resources & Employer Actions

What Employers Can Do

- ☐ Include Valley fever in your Injury and Illness Prevention Program.
- ☐ Train workers on Valley fever prevention and symptoms.
- ☐ Check out the California Department of Public Health's resources on the [CDPH work-related Valley fever web page](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/workrelatedvalleyfever) (www.cdph.ca.gov/workrelatedvalleyfever).
- ☐ For an overview of Valley fever trends in California since 2001, please see [CDPH Year-end Valley Fever Data Dashboard](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/ValleyFeverDashboard.aspx). (www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/ValleyFeverDashboard.aspx)
- ☐ Visit the [CDPH general Valley fever web page](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/valleyfever) for more information about Valley fever illness. (www.cdph.ca.gov/valleyfever).
- ☐ Call or email your local health department's communicable disease contact for information on Valley fever in areas where you will be working. Find your local health department on the [CDPH list of local health departments](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/LocalHealthServicesAndOffices.aspx) (www.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/LocalHealthServicesAndOffices.aspx).
- ☐ See Cal/OSHA's guidance on employer responsibilities for preventing Valley fever and what to do if workers get sick. Includes guidance on respirator programs. Visit [Cal/OSHA Valley fever guidance](http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/valley-fever-home.html) (www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/valley-fever-home.html).
- ☐ Contact Cal/OSHA Consultation for free help with Valley fever prevention. Call 1-800-963-9424 or [email Cal/OSHA consultation](mailto:infocons@dir.ca.gov) (infocons@dir.ca.gov).



Special thanks to the **State Building and Construction Trades Council** for their generous collaboration.

To obtain a copy of this document in an alternate format, please call (510) 620-5757 (CA Relay Service: 711). Please allow at least ten (10) working days to coordinate alternate format services.

California Department of Public Health, Occupational Health Branch
850 Marina Bay Parkway, P-3, Richmond, CA 94804
Phone: (510) 620-5757 | www.cdph.ca.gov/ohb

Tailgate Safety Training Sign-in Sheet

Make copies of this sign-in sheet to use each time you deliver the training. Save the ones you use at trainings to keep track of which workers were trained.

Training Date: _____ Job-site Location: _____

Training Topic(s): _____

Training Done By: _____ Signature: _____

Names of Workers Attending

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