

Welcome to this edition of *Occupational Health Watch*, an update of recent activities of the California Department of Public Health's Occupational Health Branch (OHB).

Focus on...**Preventing Tick Bites Among Outdoor Workers**

California's outdoor workers are at risk for tick bites and tick-borne diseases, even during winter months. Worksites with high, wild grass, mixed hardwood forests, bushes, and leaf litter are likely to have ticks. Ticks in California can transmit pathogens that cause Lyme disease and other illnesses.

The California Department of Public Health, Vector-Borne Disease Section (VBDS) and OHB, recommend employers and workers take steps to prevent tick bites and become educated about what to do if workers are bitten.

Employers should have workers avoid working in tick habitats, when possible. If not possible, employers can ask workers to cut back tall grass or take other steps to reduce tick populations where they work.

VBDS developed a web page with resources for employers and workers that outline steps employers of outdoor workers can take to help protect them from tick bites. These steps include:

- Informing employees about how tick-borne diseases are transmitted, the risks of exposure and infection, and how to identify symptoms.
- Training employees on what a tick looks like and how to remove an attached tick.
- Requiring the use of protective clothing: light-colored, long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and socks.
- Providing EPA-registered repellents (containing $\geq 20\%$ DEET) for use on skin and clothing, while ensuring that employees understand the potential health effects and follow all label directions.
- Stressing the importance of timely reporting of workplace illnesses and injuries, including tick bites.

Employees should do their part by checking themselves and co-workers frequently for ticks; showering and washing clothing soon after returning from a tick habitat; and seeing a doctor for symptoms within 30 days after a tick bite.

Women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant should seek expert advice through their obstetrician regarding potential risks from using repellents.

You can find more information on tick-borne diseases on the [CDPH website](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Tick-Borne-Diseases.aspx) (www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Tick-Borne-Diseases.aspx).

OHB is dedicated to improving worker health and safety through prevention activities. We gather information on job hazards, work with others to test new approaches to prevent worker injury and illness, and assist with making changes at the workplace. For more information, visit the [OHB website](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/ohb) (<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/ohb>).

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