



NEWS RELEASE

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Cal/OSHA Reminder: Employers Must Take Steps to Protect Outdoor Workers from Heat Illness

Oakland—Cal/OSHA is reminding all employers with outdoor workers to take steps to prevent heat illness during a period of high heat across the state. The National Weather Service has issued [excessive heat watches](#) in effect for most parts of California tomorrow through Monday or Tuesday of next week. When the temperature is 95 degrees or more, certain employers must implement effective high-heat procedures like additional monitoring of workers for signs of heat illnesses, and those in agriculture are required to provide extra cool-down rest periods in addition to required breaks.

California's [heat illness prevention standard](#) applies to all outdoor workers, including those in agriculture, construction, landscaping and those that spend a significant amount of time working outdoors such as security guards, groundskeepers, and employees performing work in outdoor dining establishments and hair salons and barbershops, or in non-air conditioned vehicles such as transportation and delivery drivers.

While taking steps to protect their workers from heat illness, employers must also implement effective methods or procedures to protect their workers from COVID-19 and prevent the spread of this infectious disease at each worksite. Employers should be attentive to allow enough space and time for employees to take breaks as needed in adequate shade while also maintaining a safe distance from one another. For many employers this will require staggered breaks or increased shaded break areas, or both. Extra infection prevention measures should be in place such as disinfecting commonly touched surfaces, including the water and restroom facilities.

To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, employers must provide cloth face coverings or allow workers to use their own. When used properly, cloth face coverings may help prevent the spread of the disease. Employers should be aware that wearing face coverings can make it more difficult to breathe and harder for a worker to cool off, so additional breaks may be needed to prevent overheating. Workers should have face coverings at all times, but they should be removed in outdoor high heat conditions to help prevent overheating as long as physical distancing can be maintained.

Additionally, employers must also take steps to protect their workers from harmful exposure to unhealthy air due to wildfire smoke in affected areas throughout the state.

Supervisors and workers must be trained on the signs and symptoms of heat illness so that they know when to take steps that can prevent a coworker from getting sick. Employers must also evaluate each worksite and make sure their workers know their procedures for contacting emergency medical services, which includes directing them to the worksite if needed.

Employers with outdoor workers must take the following steps to prevent heat illness:

- Plan – Develop and implement an effective written heat illness prevention plan that includes emergency response procedures.
- Training – Train all employees and supervisors on heat illness prevention.
- Water – Provide drinking water that is fresh, pure, suitably cool and free of charge so that each worker can drink at least 1 quart per hour, and *encourage workers to do so*.
- Shade – Provide shade when workers request it or when temperatures exceed 80 degrees. Encourage workers to take a cool-down rest in the shade for at least five minutes when they feel the need to do so. *They should not wait until they feel sick to cool down.*

Cal/OSHA's Heat Illness Prevention special emphasis program includes enforcement of heat regulations as well as multilingual outreach and training programs for California's employers and workers. Details on heat illness prevention requirements and training materials are available online on Cal/OSHA's [Heat Illness Prevention web page](#) and the [99calor.org](#) informational website. A [Heat Illness Prevention online tool](#) is also available on Cal/OSHA's website.

Read more on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at work on [Cal/OSHA's webpage](#). Review and share DIR's [Know Your Rights videos](#), with information on workers' compensation, health and safety, paid sick leave and other labor laws in California.

Guidance for employers and workers on working safely in conditions with smoke caused by the wildfires is available on [Cal/OSHA's web page](#), including [information for protecting outdoor workers](#) and [details on how to protect indoor workers from outdoor air pollution](#).

Information on current wildfires is available from [CalFire](#) and the [Incident Information System website](#).

Cal/OSHA helps protect workers from health and safety hazards on the job in almost every workplace in California. Employers and workers who have questions or need assistance with workplace health and safety programs can call [Cal/OSHA's Consultation Services Branch](#) at 800-963-9424.

Complaints about workplace safety and health hazards can be filed confidentially with [Cal/OSHA district offices](#). Employees with work-related questions or complaints may contact DIR's Call Center in English or Spanish at 844-LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734).

Contact: Erika Monterroza / Lucas Brown, Communications@dir.ca.gov, (510) 286-1161.

The [California Department of Industrial Relations](#), established in 1927, protects and improves the health, safety, and economic well-being of over 18 million wage earners, and helps their employers comply with state labor laws. DIR is housed within the [Labor & Workforce Development Agency](#). For general inquiries, contact DIR's Communications Call Center at 844-LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734) for help in locating the appropriate [division or program](#) in our department.