

NEWS RELEASE

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Cal/OSHA Cites Six Employers over \$240,000 for Exposing Workers to Valley Fever

Bakersfield — Cal/OSHA has cited six employers \$241,950 for workplace safety and health violations after reports that workers contracted Valley Fever on a solar project construction site in Monterey County.

The employers at the California Flats Solar Project in Cholame Hills were cited for serious violations that included failure to control employee exposure to contaminated dust at the worksite, and failure to provide and ensure use of appropriate respiratory protection. One employer, Papich Construction, Inc., was [cited in 2013 for some of the same violations](#).

“Employers who work in areas endemic to Valley Fever must take preventative measures to protect workers who may be exposed,” said Juliann Sum, Chief of Cal/OSHA.

Employers cited include:

Employer	Type	Violation Classification	Proposed Penalties
McCarthy Building Companies, Inc.	General contractor	Serious – 2, General – 2	\$46,540
Papich Construction Co., Inc.	Subcontractor	Repeat Serious – 1, Serious – 1, General – 2	\$68,900
Granite Construction Co., Inc.	Subcontractor	Serious – 2, General – 2	\$46,590
Sachs Electric Company	Subcontractor	Serious – 2, General – 2	\$46,400
Dudek	Subcontractor	Serious – 1, General – 2	\$23,620
Althouse and Meade, Inc.	Subcontractor	Serious – 1	\$9,900

Valley Fever is caused by a microscopic fungus known as *Coccidioides immitis*, which lives in the top two to 12 inches of soil in many parts of the state. When soil is disturbed by digging, driving, or high winds, fungal spores can become airborne and may be inhaled by workers. While the fungal spores are more likely to be present in the soils of the Central Valley, they may also be present in other areas of California. Cal/OSHA’s

[Valley Fever informational page](#) provides detailed information with resources for workers and employers.

Tips for reducing the risk of Valley Fever exposure include:

- Determine if a worksite is in an area where fungal spores are likely to be present.
- Adopt site plans and work practices that minimize the disturbance of soil and maximize ground cover.
- Use water, appropriate soil stabilizers, and/or re-vegetation to reduce airborne dust.
- Limit workers' exposure to outdoor dust in disease-endemic areas by (1) providing air-conditioned cabs for vehicles that generate dust and making sure workers keep windows and vents closed, (2) suspending work during heavy winds, and (3) providing sleeping quarters, if applicable, away from sources of dust.
- When exposure to dust is unavoidable, provide approved respiratory protection to filter particles.
- Train supervisors and workers in how to recognize symptoms of Valley Fever and minimize exposure.

Cal/OSHA helps protect workers from safety and health 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).

Members of the press may contact Peter Melton or Jeanne-Mairie Duval at (510) 286-1161, and are encouraged to [subscribe to get email alerts](#) on DIR's press releases or other departmental updates.

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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.