

N E W S R E L E A S E

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High Heat Advisory: Cal/OSHA Cautions Employers of Increased Risks as Heat Wave Continues in Central Valley, Southern California

Oakland—Cal/OSHA advises employers that continued vigilance is essential as the extended heat wave continues with brutal temperatures forecast through Friday in Southern California and the Central Valley.

“Although some areas in the state are beginning to cool down, the extended heat wave in the Central Valley and Southern California will require employers to take special precautions. Rest, water, shade and increased vigilance are absolutely essential in high heat conditions,” said Christine Baker, Director of the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR). Cal/OSHA is a division of DIR.

Cal/OSHA is actively investigating two outdoor worksite deaths that occurred during the heat wave: a 55-year-old construction worker died last Friday in Yuba City and a 30-year-old farmworker who had been working at a watermelon field southwest of Fresno near Coalinga in the Fresno region died yesterday. The investigations are ongoing and are pending determination of cause of death by the coroner.

“Cal/OSHA is out in force throughout the state, reviewing outdoor worksites to ensure that employers are following heat illness prevention regulations,” said Cal/OSHA Chief Ellen Widess. “Employers should know that workers who labor under excessive heat for extended periods of time are likely to exhibit fatigue more quickly than in shorter heat waves. The probability of serious heat illness for outdoor workers is much higher right now.”

California’s [heat regulations](#) require all employers with outdoor workers take basic steps to protect their workers:

- Train all employees and supervisors about heat illness prevention before work begins.
- Provide plenty of cool, fresh water and encourage employees to drink water frequently.
- Provide a readily accessible shaded area for workers to take a cool down recovery break, and provide rest breaks when workers request them.
- Ensure that workers are given enough time to adjust, or “acclimatize” to the heat. This is especially important for new workers and for all workers during a sudden heat wave. This step can mean the difference between life and death.

- Prepare an emergency heat illness prevention plan for the worksite, with training for supervisors and workers on the steps to take if a worker shows signs or symptoms of heat illness.

Special “High Heat” procedures are also required when temperatures reach 95 degrees. Since workers are at greater risk, supervisors must take extra precautions:

- Observe workers for signs and symptoms of heat illness.
- Remind workers to drink water frequently.
- Provide close supervision of workers in the first 14 days of their employment (to ensure acclimatization).
- Have effective communication systems in place to be able to summon emergency assistance if necessary.
- Ensure effective emergency procedures are in place in case workers become ill.
- Employers may want to adjust work schedules to avoid the peak heat times of the day. In all cases, employers need to be extremely vigilant.

Visit [Cal/OSHA’s Heat Illness web page](#) or the [Water. Rest. Shade.](#) campaign site for online information on the heat illness prevention requirements, training materials in multiple languages, and bilingual training sessions for employers and workers. A [Heat Illness Prevention e-tool](#) is available on Cal/OSHA’s [website](#), and more information can be found on DIR’s [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages.

Cal/OSHA’s [Consultation Program](#) provides free and voluntary assistance to employers and employee organizations to improve their health and safety programs. For assistance from the Cal/OSHA Consultation Program, employers can call (800) 963-9424.

Employees with workplace safety questions or complaints, including heat illness, can contact the [Cal/OSHA district office](#) in their region to file a confidential report. Recorded messages in English and Spanish detailing resources for California workers are also available toll free at 1-866-924-9757.

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