

## N E W S   R E L E A S E

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### **Labor Enforcement Task Force Takes Action to Prevent Worker Fatalities and Serious Injuries**

**Oakland**—California’s Labor Enforcement Task Force (LETF) has discovered safety violations during targeted inspections this month that put workers in immediate danger of serious injuries (including amputations, paralysis and fractures) and fatalities. The task force immediately issued orders stopping work at four sites, preventing injuries and requiring employers to correct the hazardous conditions.

LETF is a coalition of California State and local enforcement agencies that formed in 2012 to combat the underground economy. LETF teams conduct monthly inspections targeting employers in high-risk industries. On August 19 investigators discovered serious safety violations at a food processing plant in Yuba City, a roofing operation in San Diego, and a garment factory in Los Angeles. A fourth violation was discovered on August 25 at a plastering operation in San Diego.

“The underground economy exposes workers to dangerous job conditions and financial abuse,” said Christine Baker, Director of the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR). “These inspections give us an opportunity to help employers understand how best to protect their employees.” LETF operates under the direction of DIR.

The most serious of the violations discovered this month occurred with employees of Commercial & Industrial Roofing Company, Inc. in San Diego. At least four employees were working with no fall protection near the edge of a four-story building’s roof—at a height greater than 50 feet—where a fall would have likely caused death. Cal/OSHA previously cited this business \$800 following an accident on June 20, 2008 in which a roofer lacerated his left hand with a high-pressure spray gun.

Similarly serious violations were discovered when LETF inspected Boland Plastering, also in San Diego. Inspectors observed workers on an 11-foot-high scaffold with a base that was insecure, had missing rails and was not fully planked. A fall from that height could result in head trauma, paralysis or death.

“LETF monitors not only for safety violations, but also for violations of wage, tax and licensing laws,” said Dominic Forrest, Chief of the Labor Enforcement Task Force. “We also offer information that helps employers understand and follow their responsibilities.”

At the New Freedom garment factory in Los Angeles, investigators found both safety and labor law violations. Workers installing rivets onto pants were using a machine with an exposed flywheel and no safety guards, exposing themselves to finger and hand amputations. In addition, LETF investigators cited the employer \$29,257 for failing to carry workers' compensation, not paying minimum wage or overtime and not providing workers with an itemized wage statement.

This month, investigators also issued a stop-work order at Bhatti Farms in Yuba City upon observing workers using an unguarded dipping line machine, which is used to process plums into prunes. Without guards, workers could become entangled in the moving parts of the machine, resulting in substantial probability of injuries including fractures or amputations.

Multi-agency joint enforcement produces significant results, as detailed in a 2015 [report](#) to the legislature. LETF focuses on high-risk industries known to frequently abuse the rights of low wage workers such as car wash, restaurant, manufacturing, roofing, construction, agricultural and auto repair businesses. To learn more about LETF, the underground economy, and to access educational materials to inform workers of their rights and employers of their responsibilities, please visit the [LETF home page](#).

Leads on underground employers and reports of labor law violations can be submitted online through [LETF's Online Referral Form](#), by emailing the information to [LETF@dir.ca.gov](mailto:LETF@dir.ca.gov), or by calling LETF toll-free at 1-855-297-5322. [LETF labor law publications](#) for both workers and employers are also available for free online.

Employees with work-related questions or complaints may contact DIR's Call Center in English or Spanish at 844-LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734). The California Workers' Information line at 866-924-9757 provides recorded information in English and Spanish on a variety of work-related topics.

Members of the press may contact Erika Monterroza or Peter Melton 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