

# Safety News

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News About Occupational Safety and Health in PUBLIC AGENCIES

## Take Care With Hazardous Substances

Sometimes, in the course of your work, it may be necessary to use substances that have potentially hazardous properties. The hazards may take different forms (mist, vapor, liquid, dust, fume or gas) and affect workers in different ways. The type of substance, the way it's used, and the form it takes determines its effect and what must be done to avoid harmful exposures. But, there are some basic safety precautions to take when working with or around any hazardous substance.

Labels and Material Safety Data Sheets for substances clearly state its hazards and describe the precautions to take for its safe use. They will also tell you what to do in case of exposure or injury. If you don't know the hazards or precautions for a substance, don't use it until you check with your foreman or supervisor.

Always wear the recommended personal protective equipment, such as glasses, gloves or respirator. If your skin or clothing becomes contaminated by the substance, shower or wash the exposed skin areas and change or decontaminate the clothing. Engineering controls, such as exhaust ventilation, may be necessary when using certain substances. Obey any posted signs indicating areas requiring particular caution, no smoking or the necessity for personal protective equipment.

When working with or around chemicals, never take food into the work area and always wash your hands thoroughly before eating. If necessary, shower and change your clothes before going home. Don't take contaminated clothing home

to be laundered, you could expose your family to the contaminant. Properly dispose of clothing designed for single use.

Keep the work area clean so there is less risk of contamination and store substances according to label directions. Because some substances react violently with one another, you must be careful where you store them and which substances you mix together. If there's a substance leak or spill, keep away from it unless you know what it is and how to safely clean it up and dispose of the cleaning material.



You should also know what to do in case of a substance-related emergency. Know where wash stations are located, where to find and how to use emergency protective equipment, fire extinguishers, and first aid supplies. Also know where to quickly locate the numbers of local medical, fire, and hazard response personnel. You can work safely with a hazardous substance by reading its label, following safe handling procedures, and using recommended protective equipment. □

## Don't Get Pushed Out Of Shape

Pushing and pulling are common work activities in many work environments. You may be required to push and pull large and small items, levers, cables, boxes, carts and more. Using material handling devices like carts, dollies or hand trucks rather than carrying material is a good idea, but pushing and pulling these devices can strain your back, shoulders and arms if not handled properly.

Many things affect the force needed to start and maintain movement of a load including: the weight of the load, the height where the force is applied (handles, conveyor height), posture (bending forward or twisting when pulling), the direction of the force applied (straight on or at an angle), the slope and condition of the surface, the condition of the item to be moved and the grip of the worker's shoes on the floor surface.

Reduce the risk of injury when pushing and pulling by using the following tips:

- Eliminate the need to push or pull by using mechanical or gravity-fed rollers, mechanized carts, vacuum lifts or powered equipment.
- Push rather than pull. Pushing a load is generally less stressful on your body because you use the weight of your body and maintain a more neutral posture.

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## FROM OUR EXPERT

### Valley Fever – Blowing In The Wind

**V**alley Fever (a disease named after the San Joaquin Valley) is caused by inhaling the spores of fungi called *Coccidioides*. These fungi live in semiarid soil and are found in the southwestern United States and parts of Mexico and South America. The medical term for Valley Fever is coccidioidomycosis. Over 2500 cases of coccidioidomycosis were reported in California in 2008. The actual number of infections was likely higher.

About 60% of infections with *Coccidioides* do not cause any symptoms. Infected persons with symptoms usually experience a flu-like illness, with fever, cough, headache, rash, and muscle aches, but severe pneumonia can develop. Symptoms typically occur 1-4 weeks after exposure.

While most people recover from Valley Fever within weeks to months after developing symptoms, a small percentage fails to recover and develops chronic lung infection or the infection spreads from the lungs to other parts of the body, a serious condition known as disseminated coccidioidomycosis. This condition most commonly results in skin lesions, central nervous system infection, and bone and joint

infection. Fortunately, less than 1% of patients develop the disseminated disease; those at increased risk include people of African, Asian, or Filipino descent, pregnant women in their third trimester, and persons with weakened immune systems.



Unlike some infectious diseases, Valley Fever is not spread from person to person.

People get infected with *Coccidioides* by inhaling fungal spores that become airborne after soil disturbance. Construction, excavation, agriculture, and archaeological digging are some occupations which can disturb the soil and

put workers at increased risk. Natural phenomenon (wind storms, dust storms, and earthquakes) and recreational activities (dirt biking and driving ATVs or 4-wheel drive vehicles off-road) can also disturb the soil and put people at increased risk.

Employers should take steps to protect workers who are potentially exposed. Control measures include dust control (for example, wetting of soil), enclosed cabs on heavy equipment, and use of respirators. Employees that work in occupations with potential exposure should receive training on the signs and symptoms of the disease.

Individuals that develop symptoms of Valley Fever should seek medical care and let their doctor know if they live, work, or travel in an area where Valley Fever is endemic. The disease can be diagnosed through blood tests or specimen cultures.

For more information on coccidioidomycosis, visit the Centers for Disease Control at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). □

*Written by Beth Mobr, PhD., CIH, and Vince Moretto M.S. (vmoretto@scif.com), Industrial Hygienists with State Fund.*

#### Pushing And Pulling *continued from page 1*

When you pull, your body is often twisted and you frequently use only one hand.

- Use devices that reduce the coefficient of friction between the object being moved and the surface area. For example, mount appropriate casters on carts and movable furniture, assure smooth unbroken surfaces on counters and shelves, and sliders for moving heavy items on carpet.
- Ensure that surfaces are clean and free of debris to reduce physical barriers to movement.
- Use a vehicle or conveyor that can accommodate the size and weight of the load you are moving. Ensure that the design and type of conveyance

is well maintained and appropriate for the item to be moved.

- Ensure that you are not exceeding the recommended force for pushing your cart or hand truck. Measure the forces and follow recommended guidelines. See the ErgoMatters® “Measuring Push/Pull Forces on Carts” (<http://www.scif.com/safety/ergomatters/Carts.html>)
- Whenever possible apply force from approximately elbow height. Add handle extensions or provide vertical handles, assure that conveyor heights are correct, add platforms to workstations or redesign workplaces so that vertical

pulls are not above shoulder height or below knee height.

When pushing or pulling heavy objects be sure to use good body mechanics:

- Tighten your stomach muscles
- Bend your knees
- Lean in slightly toward the object you are pushing
- Lean slightly away from the object when pulling
- Keep your back and wrists straight
- Use your legs and weight of your body to move the object. □

# Safety Topic / Temas de Seguridad

## Topic Review / Revisión Del Tema

### Lyme Disease

Lyme Disease is a serious, tick-borne illness that can cause chronic muscle pain, inflammatory arthritis, heart disease and/or neurological disorders. Because the disease can be long term and debilitating, early recognition and diagnosis is important so that it can be successfully treated with antibiotics.

In California, Lyme Disease is transmitted to humans by black-leg ticks. These ticks, which are more abundant in spring and early summer, are smaller than common dog or cattle ticks so they can easily go unnoticed. When possible, avoid tick habitats such as brushy or overgrown grassy and wooded areas and reduce tick and host (deer and rodent) habitats by removing leaves, tall grass, and brush from around work areas.

In situations where you can't avoid or clear tick and host habitats protect yourself by:

- Wearing light-colored clothes so that ticks can be easily seen and removed before attachment
- Covering exposed skin with a long-sleeved shirt,

a hat, gloves, and neck scarf, long pants tucked into socks with high boots or closed shoes that cover the entire foot

- Applying insect repellents on the skin and permethrin on clothes which kills ticks
- Carefully examining the body for ticks and then showering after working in high risk areas
- Washing in hot water clothing worn in high risk areas
- Promptly removing an attached tick with tweezers and thoroughly cleaning the affected area with an antiseptic

The diagnosis of Lyme Disease is primarily based on a known exposure and recognition of disease symptoms. Flu-like symptoms may include a fever, lymph node swelling, neck stiffness, generalized fatigue, headaches, migrating joint aches and/or muscle aches. Lyme Disease often – but not always – is characterized by a ‘bull’s-eye’ rash in addition to symptoms.

Take precautionary measures in high-risk areas and if disease symptoms appear, see a doctor immediately.

### La enfermedad de Lyme

La enfermedad de Lyme es una afección grave, transmitida por las garrapatas, que puede causar dolores musculares crónicos, artritis inflamatoria, enfermedades del corazón y/o trastornos neurológicos. Debido a que la enfermedad puede ser debilitante y a largo plazo, su reconocimiento y diagnóstico tempranos son importantes para poder tratarla con éxito usando antibióticos.

En California, la enfermedad de Lyme es transmitida a las personas por las garrapatas de patas negras. Estas garrapatas, que son más abundantes en la primavera y comienzos del verano, son más pequeñas que las garrapatas comunes en los perros o en el ganado, por lo que fácilmente pueden pasar desapercibidas. Siempre que sea posible, evite estar en los lugares donde viven las garrapatas, como son las áreas de arbustos, malezas y bosques, y reduzca el hábitat de las garrapatas y sus huéspedes (venados y roedores) eliminando las hojas, yerbas altas y arbustos de los alrededores de las áreas de trabajo.

En situaciones en las que no se pueden evitar las áreas contaminadas ni eliminar los hábitats de las garrapatas y sus huéspedes, protéjase tomando las siguientes medidas:

- Vista ropa de color claro para poder ver fácilmente las garrapatas y quitárselas antes de que lo piquen
- Cúbrase la piel expuesta con una camisa de manga larga, un sombrero, guantes, bufanda sobre el cuello y pantalones

largos metidos en las medias o calcetines con botas altas y zapatos cerrados que le cubran todo el pie

- Aplíquese en la piel repelentes contra insectos y permethrina (que mata las garrapatas) en la ropa
- Examínese cuidadosamente todo el cuerpo para detectar las garrapatas y báñese en regadera después de trabajar en áreas de alto riesgo
- Lave en agua caliente la ropa usada en áreas de alto riesgo
- Quítese rápidamente cualquier garrapata que lo pique usando pinzas delgadas y límpiase el área afectada con un antiséptico

El diagnóstico de la enfermedad de Lyme se basa principalmente en una exposición conocida y reconocimiento de los síntomas de la enfermedad. Síntomas similares a los de la gripe pueden incluir fiebre, inflamación de los ganglios linfáticos, rigidez en el cuello, cansancio general, dolores de cabeza y de diferentes articulaciones y/o dolores musculares. La enfermedad de Lyme con frecuencia – pero no siempre – se caracteriza por una erupción “en forma de tiro al blanco”, además de los otros síntomas.

Tome medidas de precaución en las áreas de alto riesgo, y si se le presentan síntomas de la enfermedad, consulte a un médico de inmediato.

Instructor \_\_\_\_\_

Date / Fecha \_\_\_\_\_

Location / Ubicación \_\_\_\_\_

Attended by / Asistente(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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### Safety Recommendations / Recomendaciones de seguridad

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ISSUE ONE  
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## Loss Control Services

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This Newsletter

## We're Here For You

State Fund's Safety & Health Services Department maintains a staff of highly trained and experienced professionals including Loss Control Consultants, Industrial Hygienists, and Ergonomists who produce a wide range of safety and health products and provide services to insureds, Brokers, and stakeholders.

Products and services are reflective of current Cal/OSHA guidelines and standards and include:

- **Newsletters** – Clients receive quarterly industry-specific newsletters with safety, health, and compliance recommendations and bi-lingual safety meeting topics.
- **Seminars** – State Fund-sponsored seminars on regulatory, safety, or health issues are conducted statewide throughout the year.
- **Training Products** – There is ongoing product development of hard copy and downloadable brochures, training CDs, and ErgoMatters®.
- **Safety Meeting Topics and Loss Control Bulletins** – We have produced over 300 online bilingual safety topics that include sign-in sheets for recordkeeping.
- **Safety and Health Experts** – Our staff of Loss Control Consultants, Industrial Hygienists and Ergonomists conduct on-site surveys, partnering with clients' efforts to establish safe workplaces.

For more information, call your local State Fund Office or visit [www.scif.com](http://www.scif.com). □

## Employer Education Series

State Fund continues to promote community educational outreach by increasing the quantity and frequency of employer seminars. These seminars are produced and sponsored by State Fund and are open to State Fund policyholders. The seminar topics cover all aspects of worker's compensation and are offered statewide.

As part of State Fund's Employer Education Series, the local State Fund Loss Control departments offer safety seminars dedicated to loss prevention. They feature safety training targeted to specific industries and safety topics of interest to California employers. Various programs in the series are developed in conjunction with State Fund insured Group Programs and external affiliates and partners. Some of these partners are occupational safety and health providers such as Cal/OSHA Consultation Service, the Department of Health Services, and the University of California.

The goal of State Fund's Employer Education Series is to present valuable information from recognized safety and health experts to enable employers to reduce the frequency and severity of workplace injuries, facilitate regulatory compliance, and increase business profits.

The program venues provide the opportunity for attendees to have their workplace safety questions immediately and personally answered by industry experts. The typically half-day seminars are usually held at regional State Fund offices. To learn what programs are scheduled in your area, visit [www.scif.com](http://www.scif.com) and click on Seminars. □

## Reporting Work-Related Injuries

State Fund's Claims Reporting Center (1-888-222-3211) is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for policyholders to report injuries as soon as they occur. Agents will do the necessary paperwork to get the claim started and refer the injured to the designated physician or provider.

Within 8 hours of any serious illness or injury (requiring hospitalization over 24 hours, other than for medical observation or where there is permanent employee disfigurement) or death occurring in the workplace or in connection with employment, employers must report the incident to the Division of Occupational Safety and Health. □

This Public Agencies Safety News is produced by the Safety and Health Services Department of State Fund to assist clients in their loss control efforts. Information or recommendations contained in this publication were obtained from sources believed to be reliable at the date of publication. Information is only advisory and does not presume to be exhaustive or inclusive of all workplace hazards or situations. Permission to reprint articles subject to approval by State Compensation Insurance Fund.

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