

Safety News

STATE
COMPENSATION
INSURANCE
FUND

News About Occupational Safety and Health in **TRADES & SERVICES**

High-Powered Safety For Line Workers

Electric power line workers install, maintain, and repair electric networks between power plants and their customers. This work is hazardous; contact with high-voltage power lines can instantly electrocute you. Get proper training and safety equipment such as insulated protective clothing and tools.

Only qualified electrical workers can work on energized conductors or equipment connected to energized high-voltage systems (equal or greater than 600 volts). CalOSHA defines a qualified electrical worker as a person with at least 2 years of training and experience.

Don't work alone on high-voltage systems. Some exceptions: replacing fuses, operating switches, or other operations on de-energized conductors or equipment, clearing "trouble" tickets, or in emergencies involving hazard to life or property.

Power lines are connected to utility poles and towers or located underground in trenches and vaults. During installation, workers use construction equipment such as augers, trenchers, diggers, cranes, etc. Get training on construction equipment you use. Inspect and maintain it to ensure it runs properly and that safety features (e.g. backup horns, emergency lighting) work.

Know and understand the hazards of trenching and engulfment. Know how to dig, maintain, barricade, and enter a trench safely. Get training in confined spaces if you enter work vaults or power utility holes. Monitor the environment for hazards and have the safety equipment and backup team necessary to ensure your safe exit. Use proper lockout/blockout procedures.

If you work from heights on power poles or towers, get training in fall protection equipment and safety and rescue procedures. Know how to hoist your materials safely. Learn the safe operation of bucket trucks that access elevated job tasks. Wear properly inspected and maintained fall protection equipment.

Hand and power tools, along with chemical epoxies and cleaners are used to install and maintain network equipment (transformers, circuit breakers, switches, fuses, etc.). Use and maintain your tools properly.



Get training in the safe handling and disposal of chemicals; consult the material safety data sheet (MSDS) for additional guidance.

Power line work occurs year-round and often in remote areas, during bad weather or natural disasters, to repair and restore power in emergencies. Work with backup employees when you can. Communicate your location and expected return time with your coworkers. Wear light layers that protect you from the elements. Use reflective gear to keep you visible along roadways. □

Safety Is Part Of Your Temporary Job

Even if you work in a temporary job, you are expected to conduct yourself professionally with your safety and the safety of others in mind.

With any job, you should practice good ergonomics. Prevent injury to your muscles and tendons by avoiding or minimizing extreme positions and uninterrupted repetitive motions. Work within reach and maintain your work activity between shoulder- and waist-heights. Sit so your hands and arms can move straight out from the body with elbows kept close to the waist, without bending your wrists. Avoid forceful motions and constant pressure on hard surfaces. It's a good idea to shift positions or rotate activities periodically.

Take good care of your back. Exercise to keep your stomach, back, leg, and arm muscles strong. Maintain good sitting postures and use a footrest for prolonged standing or sitting. Lift only what you safely can and practice safe lifting techniques. Get help with heavier/larger/awkward loads and, when possible, use a mechanical lifting device.

But, if you must lift follow safe lifting techniques – tighten your stomach muscles, keep your back's natural curve, bend your knees, and lift with your legs. Remember to keep the object close to your body and lift it gradually, don't jerk or twist.

Continued on next page

ISSUE ONE, 2010

Feature Articles

High-Powered Safety For Line Workers
Safety Is Part Of Your Temporary Job

From Our Expert –

Valley Fever – Blowing In The Wind
Safety Topic – Workplace Fires
We're Here For You

In Each Issue

Employer Education Series
Reporting Injuries

FROM OUR EXPERT

Valley Fever – Blowing In The Wind

Valley 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. □

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

Temporary Workers *continued from page 1*

Be prepared for emergencies. Familiarize yourself with the emergency procedures and supplies at your employed location. Ask about evacuation routes and procedures. Before an injury occurs, review the emergency response and reporting procedures. Find out whom to call in an emergency and where contact numbers are posted. Know where to find the first aid supplies. Locate all fire extinguishers and get training in how to operate them.

Notify both your supervisors – the one at the temporary employer's location and the one at

your employing agency – if you are injured on the job. Seek medical attention immediately, if you are the victim of an injury incident.

Verbal abuse or physical violence should not be tolerated in the workplace. Take all threats seriously, whether verbal or physical and report real or perceived threats to your supervisor.

Your employer trusts you and expects that you will prevent fraud. Anyone who knowingly makes a false statement to obtain or support a false claim for workers' compensation benefits is guilty of criminal fraud. Report to your employer

if you become aware of anyone processing, presenting or negotiating a false workers' compensation claim.

Let your employer know if you have been offered a rebate, refund, commission or other consideration for procurement of fraudulent business.

Finally, make a permanent commitment to your safety, no matter how temporary the job. Attend the training your employer offers and follow all recommended safety procedures. □

Safety News

ISSUE ONE
2010

News About Occupational Safety and Health in **TRADES & SERVICES**



Loss Control Services

P.O. BOX 420807
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94142-0807



Prsrt Std
US Postage Paid
Permit 803
Zip Code 92887

Please forward to the person responsible for your safety program



Remember To Recycle
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. □

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 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 Trades & Services 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.

Published by State Compensation Insurance Fund's Safety and Health Services Department. Editor: Judy Kerry
© State Compensation Insurance Fund 2009

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER