

N E W S R E L E A S E

News Release No.: 2017-99

Date: October 27, 2017

Cal/OSHA Issues Notice for Worker Safety during Fire Cleanup

Oakland—Cal/OSHA has [posted materials](#) that provide guidance for employers and workers on working safely during fire cleanup.

Hazards remain after fires have been extinguished and cleanup begins. Employers performing cleanup and other work in areas damaged or destroyed by fire are required to identify and evaluate these hazards, correct any unsafe or unhealthy conditions and provide training to employees.

Potential hazards in fire cleanup areas include but are not limited to the following:

- Fire from heat sources such as smoldering wood or debris coming into contact with flammable material. Fire extinguishers should be provided at every cleanup job.
- Electricity from reenergized power lines and electrical equipment after an outage. Precautions must be taken when generators are used at worksites and if water has been near electrical circuits or equipment.
- Flammable gases from pipes and tanks. Employers must make sure pipes and tanks are properly shut off if they are potentially damaged or leaking.
- Carbon monoxide poisoning from gasoline or diesel-powered pumps, generators and pressure washers. This equipment may be used for fire cleanup but is prohibited indoors in most situations.
- Unstable structures from fire damage. Buildings or structures can collapse without warning—assume they are unstable until examined and certified safe for work by a qualified person.
- Demolition or dismantling damaged structures exposes workers to unexpected collapse, falling objects and hazardous materials. Before commencing work, employers must review and address all demolition safety requirements.
- Sharp or flying objects from handling, cutting or breaking up debris. Employers must provide and ensure employees wear appropriate eye, hand and foot protection.

- Confined space hazards include toxic exposure, asphyxiation, electrocution and unguarded moving machinery. Employers must evaluate worksites to determine if there are confined spaces and review all safety requirements for working in confined spaces.
- Ash, soot and dust can cause irritation and damage to workers' lungs if inhaled. When exposure would probably cause injury or illness, employers must provide NIOSH-certified respirators designated as N-95 or greater.
- Asbestos in damaged structures poses serious health hazards to employees. Safety regulations are available on [Cal/OSHA's Asbestos Information page](#).
- Stored chemicals in potentially damaged or dislodged tanks, drums, pipes and equipment pose hazards to workers. Only workers with the required skills, training and personal protective and emergency equipment are allowed to clean up hazardous spills.
- Heat illness is a hazard for outdoor workers. Employers must provide potable drinking water free of charge, rest breaks and access to shade to prevent heat illness. More detail is available on [Cal/OSHA's Heat Illness Prevention page](#).

Cal/OSHA helps protect workers from health and safety hazards on the job in almost every workplace in California. [Cal/OSHA's Consultation Services Branch](#) provides free and voluntary assistance to employers to improve their health and safety programs. Employers should call (800) 963-9424 for assistance from Cal/OSHA Consultation Services.

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. Complaints can also be filed confidentially with [Cal/OSHA district offices](#).

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.

#



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.