



Forest Service

Los Padres National Forest  
Supervisor's Office

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**File Code:** 6700  
**Route To:**

**Date:** Aug 4, 2025

**Subject:** Valley Fever Exposure Notification

**To:** Personnel Working on the Gifford Fire

**Incident # CA-LPF-002181**

This letter is documentation that you may have been exposed to Valley Fever, while working on the Los Padres National Forest. Valley fever, or *coccidioidomycosis*, is an illness caused by fungal spores found in the soil in the southwestern United States and south-central Washington. Valley Fever is contracted by breathing in spores from soil or airborne dust particles. Valley Fever is typically not contagious (cannot spread person-to-person).

During fire suppression and suppression repair activities, you may have performed wildland fire tasks associated with increased risk for exposure. These tasks may include: being in close proximity to helicopter operations that throw dust into the air, digging or preparing fireline, mopping up (suppression efforts), hiking or traveling in areas with loose soil (dozer line or handline), working around and operating heavy equipment, working in camps with high traffic and minimal dust control.

All employees should keep their Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS) Responder Master Record up to date to document the number and duration of incident responses. At this time, the IQCS master record meets Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) requirements for documentation.

It is also important that present and former employees maintain copies of their records. For the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) Presumptive Illness claims processed last year, most were from former Forest Service employees or widowers/survivors. Most had difficulties finding records.

If further documentation is desired, employees are advised to log their exposure into eSafety. If available, the narrative should include public health or exposure monitoring data. The submitted narrative should document work dates, tasks performed, location and any information available describing the type and amount of exposure.

**Entering the incident into eSafety**

Enter it as an Employee Illness. Ensure it is entered as a "Precautionary or First Aid



Claim” because there will not be an associated illness with it since it is an exposure. You will also want to ensure that you select “No” when the prompt/questions asks if a claim should be filed. If there is an associated illness with this precautionary/exposure claim, then a CRM case would need to be initiated with HR OWCP to change the claim from a “No” to “Yes”.

**Sample language for eSafety:**

*On [dates], while working as [position] on the Gifford Fire in [county], I may have been exposed to dust containing Valley fever spores in this endemic area. Despite using PPE, I worked in dusty areas, and it is possible that I inhaled airborne spores during normal fire operations. About [days] later, I developed symptoms associated with Valley fever. I sought medical care on [date] and was diagnosed with Valley fever (coccidioidomycosis). This potential exposure occurred in the performance of my official duties while assigned to the Gifford Fire incident number CA-LPF-002181.*

See below link in the Redbook for additional information:

[https://www.nifc.gov/sites/default/files/redbook-files/RedBook\\_Final.pdf](https://www.nifc.gov/sites/default/files/redbook-files/RedBook_Final.pdf)

**SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT CHAPTER 7**

**Industrial and Naturally Occurring Hazardous Materials Exposure**

**The following information is summarized from the WebMD entry about Valley Fever.**

Incubation period (how long it takes for symptoms to develop): 7-21 days

Common symptoms: fever, chest pains, cough, chills, fatigue, joint aches, and a red spotty rash (usually on the lower legs)

**Important Notes:** Most people exposed to Valley Fever do not become ill. When symptoms do appear, they usually resolve on their own. However, some cases of Valley Fever can become serious, so it is important to know if you have been in an area where the fungus is common.

Please talk to your healthcare provider and supervisor if you think you have Valley Fever.

CHRIS BIELECKI  
Agency Administrator

