



News Release

California Department of Industrial Relations • P.O. Box 420603 • San Francisco, CA 94142-0603 • Internet: <http://www.dir.ca.gov>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, March 29, 2011

IR# 2011-06

Internet: www.dir.ca.gov

CONTACT:

Krisann Chasarik

Dean Fryer

(415) 703-5050

Cal/OSHA reduces heat related fatalities and gains employer compliance through training

Fresno, CA— Cal/OSHA, the Nisei Farmers League and 23 other ag organizations are teaming up for this year's "Heat Illness Prevention in Agriculture" training events. The free sessions began today in Fresno and will continue throughout the spring and summer at locations across the state. The goal is to reduce heat related fatalities and gain a greater level of compliance in the ag community through training programs for growers, farm labor contractors and supervisors.

The training will provide necessary information about employers' responsibilities under California's Heat Illness Prevention Standard and will explain changes made to the regulation last August that are now in effect.

Cal/OSHA's approach of outreach, education and enforcement has led to a measurable increase in the number of employers who are complying with the regulations, up from 35% in 2006, to 76% in 2010. As a result, heat related deaths have sharply declined from 12 in 2005 to two last year.

John C. Duncan, Director of the Department of Industrial Relations, which oversees Cal/OSHA, says the heat illness prevention outreach effort is one of the most successful safety education efforts in Cal/OSHA's history.

"It is clear that our heat illness training and enforcement efforts are saving lives and resulting in increased compliance among employers," said Director Duncan. "Our efforts thus far have laid the groundwork to carry this training initiative forward and to expand this type of collaboration into other industries. These efforts will continue until we reach everyone who works out in the fields, on construction sites, anywhere out in the elements."

Cal/OSHA and its partners in agriculture held more than two dozen heat illness prevention training seminars in California last year. Some 1,600 ag employers and supervisors attended the training events that are held in both English and Spanish. Those employers passed the information on to an estimated 400,000 workers.

"Every year since we have been offering this training, we find more farm supervisors and labor contractors complying with heat illness regulations. More employers are giving the provision to workers of water, shade and training the full attention it needs," said Cal/OSHA Chief Len Welsh. "There is no doubt this outreach effort is having a positive impact, but we still have work to do in

order to reach our goal of making worker safety and health have the prominence in workplace culture that we all want to see.”

Cal/OSHA also launched a heat illness prevention media campaign in 2010. Employee surveys show 99% of outdoor workers thought the campaign advertisements were useful. After being exposed to the *Water. Rest. Shade.* campaign, the workers reported marked increases in the number of those who were asking for water, drinking water regularly during their shift, resting in the shade, and talking to coworkers about heat protection.

In 2005, California became a national leader as the first state to develop a safety and health regulation to protect workers from heat illness. Since then, Cal/OSHA has educated workers and employers in outdoor industries about the regulation’s requirements, the risks of working in the heat, and ways to stay safe.

Cal/OSHA is the employee health and safety division of the Department of Industrial Relations. For more information on heat illness prevention and training material visit the Cal/OSHA website at www.dir.dca.gov/heatillnes or the *Water. Rest. Shade.* campaign site at www.99calor.org/campaign/.

Employees with work-related questions or complaints, including heat illness, can call the California Workers’ Information Hotline at (866) 924-9757 or 1-877-99-CALOR.

#####