

# COVID-19 UPDATE



## GOVERNOR NEWSOM SIGNS BILL EXTENDING PAID SICK LEAVE FOR CALIFORNIA EMPLOYEES

On September 9, 2020, Governor Newsom signed AB 1867, legislation that immediately extends critical paid sick days protections to California's workforce. Building on historic early action to expand paid sick days to employees in the food sector at the beginning of this crisis, this legislation means that every California employee that has been exposed to or tests positive for COVID-19 will have access to paid sick days for the rest of the 2020 calendar year.

AB 1867, a budget trailer bill, closes the gaps in paid sick days provided in federal law and the Governor's Executive Order by including employers with over 500 employees and public and private employers of first responders and health care employees who opted not to cover their employees under federal law. The bill also allows California's Labor Commissioner to cite workplaces for a lack of paid sick days, a critical enforcement tool that will promote safety for employees and customers alike.

Expanding access to paid sick days and protecting employees has been a priority of the Newsom Administration before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Governor Newsom has taken several actions to benefit employees on the front lines, including paid sick days for food sector employees; workers' compensation benefits for employees who contract COVID-19 during the stay-at-home-order; critical child care services for essential employees and vulnerable populations; additional weekly unemployment benefits; and support for employees to isolate and quarantine outside their home.

For more information on this bill, please click [HERE](#).

## **WORLD AG. EXPO 2021 CANCELLED**

The 2021 World Ag Expo, held in Tulare, CA, has been canceled due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. "After working with the Tulare County Health Department and other officials, it has become evident that given health and safety restrictions from the State of California, holding a live, international event is not responsible in February," said Jerry Sinift, International Agri-Center CEO. The initial deadline for a decision on the expo was in November, but officials say the decision came earlier in order to those involved the proper time to make adjustments. The 2022 World Ag Expo is scheduled for February 8-10 in Tulare.

## **WILDFIRE AIR QUALITY REGULATIONS**

Earlier this spring, the Cal/OSHA Standards Board adopted Wildfire Smoke Regulations, which apply when employees in outdoor workplaces may be exposed to wildfire smoke. These regulations require employers to have N-95 or equivalent masks on hand when the Air Quality Index (AQI) for PM2.5 exceeds 151 and provide medical evaluation and fit testing. If the AQI exceeds 151, employees have the option of wearing an N-95 respirator but are not required to do so. If the AQI rises to 500 or higher, employees must be provided N-95 respirators.

If an employer cannot maintain a stockpile of these respirators for optional use at AQI 151 and above, outdoor worksites must shut down until the AQI has dropped below the threshold. In addition to providing masks and respirators, employers need to communicate the hazards of wildfire smoke to all employees in a readily understandable form and train employees on protective measures that are available, such as increasing rest time and frequency. Employers shall allow employees to seek medical treatment if they show signs of injury or illness due to wildfire smoke exposure.

The easiest way to find the current and forecasted AQI for PM2.5 is to go to [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov) and enter the zip code of the location where you will be working. For local updates, please locate your air district [click here](#).

More information about the Wildfire Smoke Regulations is available [here](#). The text of the regulations is can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

Additionally, the CA Fresh Fruit Association (CFFA) has reported that they have N-95 masks available on a first come, first serve basis. Please contact the CFFA office at 559-226-6630.