

Application

Caltrans Safety guidance is given in the links below. This brief guide only highlights the most common requirements for Right of Way staff when operating in the field. This guide applies to any Right of Way staff when working in the field, especially near roads and highways. This is not a substitute for the [Caltrans Safety Manual](#) (internal Caltrans link), where more detailed guidance may be found.

References

- [Director's Policy DP-03-R3: Employee Health and Safety](#) (internal Caltrans link)
- [Caltrans Safety Manual](#) (internal Caltrans link)
- [Safety Bulletins](#) (internal Caltrans link)

Safety Philosophy

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) supports, maintains, and cultivates a healthy and safe workplace for all employees (from DP-03-R3). No Right of Way work is so important or urgent as to warrant compromising safe practices.

Responsibilities

Right of Way staff working in the field shall have a practical working knowledge of this guide and the [Caltrans Safety Manual](#) (internal Caltrans link).

Staff are responsible to:

- Do everything reasonably necessary to protect life, safety, and the health of themselves, other staff, and the public.
- Comply with all occupational safety and health policies, procedures, laws, rules, and regulations.
- Promptly report injuries, illness, accidents, and unsafe conditions, tools, and equipment to their supervisor.

- Report to work mentally and physically capable of performing all their assigned duties without jeopardizing the safety and health of themselves, other staff, or the public. This means staff must be free from the effects of medication, controlled substances, alcohol, or the complications arising from illness or injury which might impair judgment or the ability to perform their work.

Supervisors are responsible for:

- Monitoring safety conditions and employee performance.
- Instructing staff about safety policies and practices affecting them.
- Prohibiting staff from working when they appear to be unable to perform their field duties, and there is concern about the safety of the employee or others.
- Designating a responsible person-in-charge when they are away from the workplace.

Planning for Safety

Safety shall be given top priority in the planning of all Right of Way field work. Factors considered when planning Right of Way work shall include:

- The safest time of the day that the Right of Way work can be accomplished.
- The optimum number of staff to accomplish the Right of Way work safely.
- The assignment of specially trained and qualified staff to the more hazardous jobs.
- Minimizing staff exposure to traffic and using a second employee as a spotter when working within close proximity to operating rights of way.

Personal Clothing Requirements

Each employee must provide and wear their own clothing, including footwear, that provides adequate protection for the assigned task.

Personal Protective Equipment

Hard hats, eye protection, and long pants shall be worn while working in or near the traveled way or construction zones. Gloves shall be worn as appropriate. State-issued hard hats must be worn when exposed to vehicular or equipment traffic, falling or flying material, or other similar hazards. Hard hats should be worn or are required when staff are within the right of way of a traveled road or on a construction site.

Warning Garments

Fluorescent orange or yellow-green color vests, shirts, or other warning garments meeting ANSI/ISEA 107-2010 Class II or III specifications shall be worn when exposed to vehicular or equipment traffic or when working within the right of way of a traveled road.

Advance Notice Prior to Field Work

Right of Way staff shall contact the Resident Engineer when planning visits to construction sites. Follow their specific directions, including specific safety requirements, and arrange in advance for a resident engineer to escort you while on site. In addition, it is recommended that the responsible Senior Right of Way Agent contact the Project Manager or Resident Engineer, as appropriate, prior to field work to advise them of dates and times of planned Right of Way activities.

Eye Protection

Safety glasses, goggles, or face shields shall be worn when working near traffic or when exposed to falling, airborne, or windblown material, or other similar hazards.

Ear Protection

Earplugs or muffs shall be worn when working around hazards affecting the ear or when noise levels may cause hearing loss. As a rule, if you cannot carry on a conversation without shouting, the noise level requires hearing protection.

Masks and Valley Fever

In counties identified by the [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\)](#) to be where infectious dust may be present, wearing masks and driving with closed windows are recommended. Alternatively, perform field work when conditions are less favorable to the spread of the infections of concern. For more information, refer to the [CDPH Valley Fever guidance](#).

For staff performing field work in highly endemic areas for Valley Fever and where soil disturbing activities are present, Assembly Bill 203 (2019) requires annual training:

[Valley Fever Awareness Online Training](#) (internal Caltrans link).

Refer also to [Chapter 15 of the Caltrans Safety Manual – Respiratory Protection Program](#) (internal Caltrans link).

Safety Meetings

Supervisors shall provide a safety briefing to staff prior to field work. At least twice yearly, the regular safety meetings shall include guidance on field safety. Meetings shall be held as required to prepare for imminent and especially potent hazards. Such hazards shall include, but not be limited to:

- Power lines
- Poisonous plants
- Snakes, insects
- Animal hazards
- Mountainous terrain
- High-fire-hazard areas
- Traffic and heavy equipment
- Water exposure
- Infectious airborne diseases (e.g., Valley Fever and Hantavirus)
- High temperature

Safety Training

All mandatory safety training shall be provided to staff.

Tools and Equipment

Use only the proper tools, in the proper condition, for each job. Do not operate machinery or equipment not within Right of Way training or classifications. Typical equipment for Right of Way activities includes cameras and electronic devices. Do not use either device in construction zones or active highways unless a spotter is present and actively watching for hazards, and both individuals are positioned outside of the traveled way and beyond the clear recovery zone.

Vehicle Operation

All operators of vehicles used on State business must be trained in defensive driver training once every four years. Each operator must drive defensively and comply with all applicable traffic laws, including maintaining a valid license.

Operational Precautions

Suspend field work when unsafe conditions or uncontrollable hazards are present. Resume work only when safe conditions are restored. Right of Way staff should not be working in the field in low-light or low-visibility conditions, on steep slopes, or near power lines. Before working in an unfamiliar environment, check with others in advance about safe procedures. Do not enter ditches, trenches, conduits, or confined spaces.