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PUBLIC SUBMISSION

Comment from Antje Lauer

Posted by the **Federal Railroad Administration** on May 21, 2021

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Have you considered testing the soil that you disturb for the presence of Coccidioides immitis, the Valley fever fungus? Graded soil left behind after construction is completed bears a risk for the public to contract coccidioidomycosis when fugitive dust emerges from these sites during the dry season or when the trains rush by. We have seen the spike in Valley fever incidence in the Lancaster area (Northern Los Angeles County), after numerous large scale solar plants were built, and the soil was left bare of any protection. Bakersfield is in the highly endemic area of the pathogen. Just educating the workers about the risk of contracting Valley fever (as required by law) and moistening the soil during construction is only a short term strategy to reduce the risk of contracting coccidioidomycosis on site during the construction process. Dust emerging from these disturbed sites can be carried by the wind to places far away and poses a risk for the general public living close by and further away that should not be underestimated. There are labs that perform soil testing for Coccidioides. If the pathogen is detected, the soil should be revegetated to reduce the risk of dust emerging from these sites. You can contact me if you like to learn more.
Thanks for reading my comment.
Sincerely,
Antje Lauer (Professor and Microbiologist, CSU Bakersfield)

Attachments 1

PlosOne 2014 Valley fever

Download (https://downloads.regulations.gov/FRA-2021-0046-0003/attachment_1.pdf)

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