

California citation claims hazardous work conditions at Safeway warehouse in Tracy

The Modesto

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A woman walks out of the Safeway store on McHenry Ave. in Modesto, California on Thursday, March 19, 2020. (Julian A. Lopez/jalopez@modbee.com)

The state has cited a large Safeway warehouse in Tracy for allegedly exposing workers to hazardous conditions.

Cal/OSHA proposes \$182,000 in penalties for [27 safety violations](#) at Safeway's Northern California Tracy Distribution Center. The violations placed about 1,700 workers at risk of serious injuries, a Cal/OSHA news release said Tuesday, citing results of a comprehensive inspection.

The state agency said eight of the 27 violations were serious in nature, including failure to identify and remedy issues related to lifting, carrying and moving heavy items.

In addition, effective training was not provided to supervisors or warehouse workers regarding the hazards.

“It is critical that employers recognize the physical demands and potential dangers faced by [warehouse workers](#) and take measures to protect their safety,” Cal/OSHA Chief Debra Lee said in the news release. “Our inspection revealed that Safeway’s demanding warehouse quotas put its worker at risk of serious injury.”



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The Tracy distribution center is the supermarket chain’s largest facility in the United States. Safeway, which has stores in Modesto, Turlock and Manteca, has a right to appeal the citations and penalties.

The company issued a statement Wednesday: “We are taking this matter very seriously and are currently investigating the details provided by Cal/OSHA. We are conducting a comprehensive review at our Tracy distribution center. As a company, we are committed to maintaining high standards and ensuring safety across all our operations.”

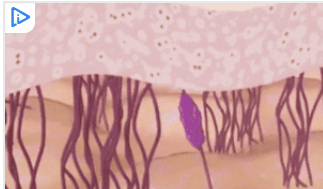
The alleged violations at the distribution center also included:

- Failure to ensure the accuracy of annual records on employee injuries and illness.

- Indoor heat hazards in the warehouse's dry building, which were not effectively addressed.
- Employees not effectively trained regarding heat hazards and failure to provide cool-down areas for meal breaks.
- Chemical and health hazards, including inadequate ventilation and exhaust systems for welders. Access to eye wash stations and safety showers was deficient for those employees exposed to corrosive substances.
- Electrical hazards were created by damaged cords and unsafe panel boards.
- Failure to provide effective refresher training and evaluations for forklift drivers and other operators of material-handling equipment.

According to a California Department of Industrial Relations fact sheet, 162,000 people are working in warehouses and distribution centers in the state. Those facilities are owned by more than 2,000 employers. With an injury and illness rate of 4.8 per 100 full-time employees, warehouse and storage facilities are among hazardous industries watched by Cal/OSHA.

The agency said a leading cause of injuries in warehouses are process quota demands placed on employees.



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