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EARTH Magazine: Valley Fever an Occupational Hazard for Geoscientists

Alexandria, Va., Valley Fever — a sometimes-fatal infection with no known cure and no vaccine — is caused by a soilborne fungus that thrives in the hot, dry soils of the southwestern U.S., Mexico and Central and South America. However, recent reports of infections far outside the endemic area indicate the fungus is either spreading or becoming active in new areas. The disease is contracted through inhalation of fungal spores, which can be aerosolized by soil disturbances from construction, excavation, gardening and landscaping, as well as natural events like dust storms, earthquakes, landslides and wildfires. Geoscientists working in the field need to take precautions against contracting the disease.

Scientists say that little is currently known about the fungus' preferred geology and how a changing climate might be affecting its spread. Read more about where the disease has been found, current research on the disease and how to protect yourself in the field in the September issue of EARTH Magazine: <http://bit.ly/111mi21>.

For more stories about the science of our planet, check out EARTH magazine online or subscribe at www.earthmagazine.org. The September issue, now available on the digital newsstand, features stories about floating nuclear plants potentially being safer from tsunamis than land-based plants, natural arsenic levels exceeding regulatory standards in Ohio, and the new literary genre of "Cli-Fi," stories about the future of humanity living under an altered climate, plus much, much more.

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Keep up to date with the latest happenings in Earth, energy and environment news with EARTH Magazine online at: <http://www.earthmagazine.org>. Published by the American Geosciences Institute, EARTH is your source for the science behind the headlines.

The American Geosciences Institute is a nonprofit federation of 49 geoscientific and professional associations that represents more than 250,000 geologists, geophysicists and other earth scientists. Founded in 1948, AGI provides information services to geoscientists, serves as a voice of shared interests in the profession, plays a major role in strengthening geoscience education, and strives to increase public awareness of the vital role the geosciences play in society's use of resources, resiliency to natural hazards, and interaction with the environment.