

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE/WEIGHTS & MEASURES

Andrew F. Smith
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Sealer of Weights & Measures



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Agriculture Access Verification Card Program Letter of Authorization

Owner/Operator: _____

Business Name: _____

As Owner/Operator, I do hereby authorize the following **direct, full-time employee*** to apply for an Agriculture Access Verification Card on my behalf and as my authorized representative:

Employee Name: _____

Employee Title: _____

Date Hired: _____ / _____ / _____ Employee Phone: (_____) _____

Employee Email: _____

Date Authorized: _____ / _____ / _____ Authorization Expiration: _____ / _____ / _____

**Direct, full-time employment refers to full-time employment in which an employer has hiring and firing authority; has direct day to day supervision of the worker; pays the worker's wages; and withholds and transmits applicable taxes on behalf of the worker. The individual applicant has a working knowledge of the operation's agricultural property, including access to irrigation systems, farm equipment, and other essential infrastructure.*

Employee must apply for an Agriculture Access Verification Card within one year after issuance of the Letter of Authorization.

Agriculture Access Verification Cards will be valid for a term of not more than 42 months from date of certified fire safety training. Upon expiration, an applicant may apply for a new Agriculture Access Verification Card.

An employee issued an Agriculture Access Verification Card must maintain employment with the employer listed in the application, otherwise the Agriculture Access Verification Card will be void and must be surrendered to the Sheriff's Office. The agricultural operation owner/operator is responsible for notifying the Sheriff's Office when an employee cardholder is no longer employed by the owner/operator.

A violation of this policy, conditions of use, or worker safety regulations may result in suspension or revocation of the violator's Agriculture Access Verification Card or all Agriculture Access Verification Cards associated with the commercial agricultural operation.

Certification and Acknowledgement

The information provided in this form is true and correct, to the best of my knowledge. I certify that I am the agriculture farm owner-operator/livestock producer or am authorized on behalf of the agricultural operations owner-operator to voluntarily submit this form. I acknowledge and understand that the Department of Agriculture/Weights & Measures has the authority to verify whether a commercial agricultural operation exists at the described location. I acknowledge and understand that access to restricted areas is subject to the jurisdiction and orders of law enforcement, fire services, emergency services, and the California National Guard. I acknowledge and agree that I and any persons who access restricted areas will follow all orders of those agencies regarding entry and exit from the property, and all other laws and regulations applicable to the commercial agricultural operation, including workplace safety laws and regulations.

I acknowledge and understand that an Agriculture Access Verification Card, if issued, does not certify compliance with any applicable laws or regulations, including workplace safety laws or regulations, nor does it guarantee access to any location. I further acknowledge and understand that an Agriculture Access Verification Card does not require the holder to work in an area subject to an evacuation order.

Indemnification, Defend, and Hold Harmless Agreement

I acknowledge and understand the inherent risks and hazards associated with accessing restricted areas subject to official road closure as the result of a local emergency. I agree to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the County of Sonoma and its officers, agents, employees, volunteers, or representatives from and against any liability, claims, actions, proceedings, losses, injuries, damages, or expenses, including associated litigation costs and attorney's fees, that may be asserted by any person or entity, including Applicant or agricultural operation owner/operator, arising out of or pertaining to the granting or denial of access. Further, I agree that I am solely responsible and will indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the County of Sonoma from any acts or omissions of the Applicant or agricultural operation owner/operator, his/her officers, agents, employees, volunteers, contractors, and subcontractors in accessing the above listed location. I further understand that if access is granted, then it is only to the location and for the activities identified above and the direct access route to and from that location; stopping along access routes, wandering, or loitering or performing activities other than those listed is strictly prohibited.

Applicant and agricultural operation owner/operator certify that they have carefully read the above Certification and Acknowledgement. Applicant and agricultural operation owner/operator further certify that they have carefully read the Indemnification, Defend and Hold Harmless Agreement and agree to be bound by it. Agriculture operation owner/operator further agrees to notify the Sheriff if and when the employee is separated from this employment.

Owner/Operator: _____

Business Name: _____

☐ **Please check this box to acknowledge that you have read and understand the Eligibility, Employee Safety, and Condition of Use of the Sonoma County Agriculture Access Verification Card Program.**

Signature: _____

Date Signed: _____ / _____ / _____ Phone Number: (_____) _____

Email: _____

Employee Safety

Access into areas subject to an evacuation order may only be granted at the discretion of the Sheriff or other authorized law enforcement representative when there is no immediate risk to life safety.

Commercial agricultural operation owners/operators must comply with all applicable worker safety regulations and protections required for the work location including those administered by the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA). Worker safety protections must reflect any change in conditions (ex. wildfire smoke) including requirements for employers to provide Personal Protective Equipment (ex. N95 masks or protective eyewear). Employers must keep a record of the identity of each employee that enters an area subject to an evacuation order, when they entered, and when they left. Employers must also deliver this collected information to the County as specified by the program's administrator.

Access to a farm or ranch by an employee and use of an Agriculture Access Verification Card must be fully voluntary. A commercial agricultural operation owner/operator cannot require an employee to obtain or use an Agriculture Access Verification Card. An Agriculture Access Verification Card in no way requires its holder to be present in an area subject to an evacuation order during or following a flood, storm, wildfire, or other disaster.

Conditions of Use

All holders of Agriculture Access Verification Cards are subject to the following conditions of use:

1. Agriculture Access Verification Cards will only be used when safe to do so as determined by public safety officials managing the incident response.
2. An Agriculture Access Verification Card does not grant permission to ignore evacuation orders or guarantee automatic entry.
3. Agriculture Access Verification Card holders must comply with all directions from law enforcement and other emergency personnel.
4. Access will not be granted outside of daylight hours and those granted access must exit prior to sunset.
5. Onsite law enforcement or other emergency personnel may place a limit on time spent behind any road closure.
6. All persons must depart the restricted area by the same route they entered.
7. A law enforcement and other emergency personnel escort may be required at the discretion of onsite law enforcement or other emergency personnel.
8. At least one person accompanying and supervising people seeking entry must have their Ag Access Verification Card in their possession. For example, if three people in one car seek to enter an evacuated area, at least one person must possess their Ag Access Verification Card.
9. Supervising individuals inside the evacuated areas must have their Ag Access Verification Card with them at all times and be able to present it to law enforcement. On-scene law enforcement maintains full discretion to remove individuals who are unable to present their Ag Access Verification Card.
10. The Ag Access Verification Card holder(s) must remain with their work teams/employees at all times.
11. All individuals who were provided access into an evacuated area must leave immediately if directed to do so by law enforcement or other emergency personnel.