



WHITE PAPER

Prevailing Wage For Public-Works Window Cleaning And Pressure Washing In California

How California's prevailing wage law applies to publicly funded window cleaning and pressure washing contracts, including maintenance work under Labor Code §1771, DIR wage determinations, contractor registration and certified payroll.

Executive Summary

When a city, school district or other public agency contracts for window cleaning or pressure washing, California's prevailing wage law can apply. Labor Code §1771 expressly reaches "contracts let for maintenance work," so routine cleaning is not automatically outside the public works rules. This paper explains the statutes and the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) steps that agencies and bidders should know.

Key Points

- **Maintenance Is Covered:** §1771 "is applicable to contracts let for maintenance work." Lab. Code §1771
- **\$1,000 Threshold:** Prevailing wage applies except for public works projects of \$1,000 or less. §1771
- **Contracted Work Only:** It does not apply to work done by a public agency with its own forces. §1771
- **Rates Come From DIR:** The Director of Industrial Relations determines rates by type of work and project location. DIR
- **Register And Report:** Contractors register with DIR (\$400 per fiscal year) and most projects require certified payroll records filed with the Labor Commissioner. DIR

What Counts As Public Works

Labor Code §1720 defines "public works" to include "construction, alteration, demolition, installation, or repair work done under contract and paid for in whole or in part out of public funds," and defines construction to include "all cleanup work at the jobsite." §1720 Section 1771 then requires prevailing wages for all workers employed on public works, except projects of \$1,000 or less, and extends that requirement to maintenance contracts. §1771

DIR Wage Determinations

According to DIR, all workers employed on public works projects "must be paid the prevailing wage determined by the Director of the Department of Industrial Relations, according to the type of work and location of the project," and rates are "usually based on rates specified in collective bargaining agreements." Agencies and bidders should look up the determination that matches the craft and county before pricing a bid. [DIR Prevailing Wage](#)

Registration And Certified Payroll

Contractor Registration

To register as a public works contractor, DIR requires workers' compensation coverage for any employees, use only of registered subcontractors, a CSLB license if applicable to the trade, no delinquent unpaid wage or penalty assessments, and no debarment. Registration runs by fiscal year (July 1 to June 30) at \$400, \$800 or \$1,200 for one, two or three years. [DIR Contractor Registration](#)

Registration Situation	DIR Penalty
First-Time Registrant Who Bid, Was Awarded Or Worked On Public Works In Past 12 Months	\$2,000
Accidental Lapse While Bidding Or Working	\$400
Non-Accidental Lapse	\$2,000

Certified Payroll Records

"Contractors and subcontractors on most public works projects are required to submit certified payroll records (CPRs) to the Labor Commissioner using DIR's Public Works Website Services," with a few categories exempt from online reporting. [DIR CPR](#)

What Agencies Should Ask Bidders

Checklist Item	Basis
Active DIR Public Works Registration (Prime And Subs)	DIR registration
Correct Prevailing Wage Determination Identified For Craft And County	DIR / §1771
Commitment To File Certified Payroll Records	DIR CPR
Workers' Compensation Coverage	DIR registration; Lab. Code §3700
CSLB License If Applicable To The Trade	DIR registration

Whether a specific cleaning contract is public works depends on its funding, scope and the agency; DIR and agency counsel make that call.

Sources

- Cal. Labor Code §1771. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=LAB&sectionNum=1771.
- Cal. Labor Code §1720. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=LAB&sectionNum=1720.
- DIR, Prevailing Wage. <https://www.dir.ca.gov/public-works/prevailing-wage.html>
- DIR, Public Works Contractor Registration. <https://www.dir.ca.gov/public-works/contractor-registration.html>
- DIR, Certified Payroll Reporting. <https://www.dir.ca.gov/public-works/certified-payroll-reporting.html>

This paper summarizes regulations and agency guidance for general information and is not legal advice. Requirements may change and vary by city; consult the current text, your local agency and qualified professionals.

About Window Cleaning Bay Area

Window Cleaning Bay Area provides commercial window cleaning, pressure washing and solar panel cleaning across the San Francisco Bay Area. Contact: grayson@windowcleaningbayarea.com