Your first-week kit

1 Write down four dates

Separation date _____

Final pay date _____

Health coverage ends _____

Deadline to decide on the agreement _____

On a layoff in California, final wages are due immediately, including vested vacation.

2 Today

- You do not have to sign anything on the day you are told.
- Save your own records before access ends: pay stubs, offer letter, documents you signed, benefits summaries. Not company confidential material. The download list
- Keep every version of the agreement you receive as a separate file, with the date in the name.
- Write down what was said in the meeting while you remember it.

3 This week

- File for unemployment right away. Do not wait for the agreement to be finished.
- Send one written request for your records. It starts clocks with penalties attached. Records request letter
- Price Covered California against COBRA before you elect either. You generally have 60 days.
- List any unreimbursed work expenses and submit them.

4 Before you sign anything

- Count your review period on a calendar. In California it is at least five business days for most separation agreements, and longer for age claims if you are 40 or over. How long do you have?
- If a new version arrives, compare it with the one you read, and ask in writing for a list of changes. Ask for a redline
- Find any statement you are asked to confirm, such as having no pending claims, and check that it is true.
- Ask whether a second document will follow, and see its text first.
- Get a complete copy of what you sign, plus the signing certificate.

5 Where to get real answers

A free legal aid program, the State Bar's lawyer referral services, the Labor Commissioner for unpaid wages, the Civil Rights Department for discrimination or retaliation, and EDD for unemployment. Contacts and deadlines Hard week? Call or text 988, or dial 211 for food, rent and bills.
