



SAFETY UNLIMITED, INC.

Weekly Safety Meeting

The Dangers of Snakes

Venomous snakes found in the United States include rattlesnakes, copperheads, cottonmouths/water moccasins, and coral snakes. They can be dangerous to outdoor workers including farmers, foresters, landscapers, groundskeepers, gardeners, painters, roofers, pavers, construction workers, laborers, mechanics, and any other workers who spend time outside.

Although rare, some workers with a severe allergy to snake venom may be at risk of death if bitten. It has been estimated that 7,000–8,000 people per year receive venomous bites in the United States, and about 5 of those people die.

The number of deaths would be much higher if people did not seek medical care. It is important for employers to train their workers about their risk of exposure to venomous snakes, how they can prevent, and protect themselves from, snakebites, and what they should do if they are bitten.

Dr. JoAnn Schulte, a medical epidemiologist, states that if anti-venom is needed a hospital bill can easily reach over \$100,000 dollars.

Snakes are important predators within the ecosystem, typically feeding on rodents, birds, and insects. These reptiles are cold-blooded and must rely on external heat sources to regulate their body temperature.

Prevention:

1. Be aware of your surroundings at all times. Don't just blindly wander through woods, weeds, trails, bushes, and the like.
2. Avoid specific snake habitats like brush piles, debris mounds, logjams, root systems, abandoned buildings, watery areas "cover" in general. Remember, they may be anywhere else too!
3. Wear leather shoes or boots at least ankle high or better when walking in suspected snake country.
4. Never sit, climb (feet and hands), or step over obstacles anywhere without first looking carefully prior to taking the move.
5. Observation is critical to avoidance - learn to check around with a sweeping glance for anything that seems out of place, for this may be your subconscious notice of a camouflaged critter lurking close by.
6. Near water of any kind, be aware that many species "hang out" there and will likely be quite hidden from view while they are sleeping or hunting - just be more alert.

7. Remember that snakes have needs for shelter, water, and food, basically in that order just to survive, so be aware of these "needs" and be alert when these are especially present in any combination. Learn to recognize food favorites of the species in your area so that when you know the food animal's habits, you also know those of the snakes!
8. Try not to stalk along quietly as snakes have many sensing devices to warn them of your presence - let these work freely with noise, movements, etc. and thus not make the snake think it may be the target of a predator when it would need to become more aggressive!
9. When a snake is spotted, leave it alone! So many bite victims have chosen to hit the snake or try to catch it. Remember, where there is one, there are likely others! Be alert!
10. Learn more about snakes in the area where you live, work, or play so that you better understand their capabilities and behaviors.
11. Learn basic snakebite first aid. Prepare yourself and always expect the unexpected.

If you get bitten:

Dos:

- Remain calm and if someone you're with is bitten, reassure the victim.
- Remove all jewelry, watches, etc. from the affected area.
- Immobilize extremity and keep at level below the heart.
- Decrease total body activity as is feasible.
- Move victim to medical facility without delay.

Don'ts:

- Do not apply ice to the bite area.
- Do not make an incision of any kind.
- Do not use a constriction band or tourniquet.
- Do not administer alcohol or drugs.
- Do not use electric shock treatment.

Remember:

Most snakes are harmless, and the majority of snakebites are not fatal. Usually a snakebite results in only minor injury. Very few people are actually at risk of even encountering a snake with venom powerful enough to kill. However, people with underlying health problems may be at greater risk even when facing a non-lethal snake, so be sure to see a doctor just in case.

STAY ALERT...DON'T GET HURT!

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

Supervisor:	Subject:
Location:	Date:
Conducted By:	Trainer Signature:

Name (print clearly)	Signature	Comments / Safety Concerns / Training Requests

