



Weekly Safety Meeting

Insects and Outdoor Safety

As summer approaches, you may notice an increase in the number of insects buzzing around outside. People with an allergy to stinging insects will want to take extra precautions this time of year. Up to 5% of Americans are at risk for anaphylaxis, a severe, potentially life-threatening allergic reaction from insect stings.

This may be fatal if not treated immediately. Symptoms of anaphylaxis to watch for include itching and hives over large areas of the body, including away from the site of the sting, swelling of the throat or tongue, difficulty breathing, dizziness, stomach cramps, nausea, and diarrhea. If you suffer from a stinging insect allergy, you should take extra precautions to avoid being stung.

Unfortunately, most people are not aware they are allergic to insect stings or bites until after experiencing a reaction. An allergic reaction occurs when the immune system overacts to the insect venom.

Bees, Wasps, Yellow Jackets, and African Honeybees:

Stings kill more people each year than all other venomous animals combined. Yellow jackets can sting repeatedly. Honeybees have barbed stingers that remain in your skin. African honeybees can threaten your life. Even if you're not allergic or sensitive to bee stings, multiple stings can cause anaphylactic shock.

- Look out for swarms, a hive could be nearby. Beehives and yellow jacket nests are found in hollow trees, ground holes or culverts, and hanging from tree limbs;
- Keep food and drinks in vehicles. Bees are attracted to sweet smells;
- Loud noises, engine or motor vibration, and waving your arms can provoke an attack. If attacked, cover your face and run to the nearest enclosed shelter;
- Watch for unusual reactions to stings. Call 911 immediately;
- Remove bee stingers right away by scraping horizontally with a knife or credit card. Never squeeze the stinger because venom can be injected into the skin from the stinger; and
- Wash the area of the sting with soap and water to avoid infection; ice packs, creams, sting swabs, or antihistamines can decrease pain and swelling.

Fire Ants:

When fire ant colonies are disturbed, they swarm over the victim and inflict as many as 5,000 stings in a few seconds. Fire ant venom is toxic and can cause a life-threatening medical emergency. Fire ants can be found under buildings, in mounds, in yards, in fields, along highways, and in ditches. They also will nest in utility boxes. On occasions they can be the direct cause of a short, causing power outages and even fires!

- Check electrical boxes regularly;
- Keep piles of dirt away from buildings;
- If nests are found, call a professional exterminator. Don't attempt to eliminate them yourself;
- Minor symptoms include severe burning pain and blisters; and

- Severe reactions to bites, such as difficulty breathing and/or swallowing, should be treated immediately by emergency medical personnel.

Ticks:

Many diseases are transmitted from ticks. Lyme Disease and Rocky Mountain Fever are the most common ones. Bacteria carried by deer ticks cause Lyme Disease. Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever occurs across the country, but more often on the East Coast and in the southeast and south-central states. Even a year after an exposure, you can suffer from heart abnormalities and other symptoms. Left untreated Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever can cause flu like symptoms, mental confusion, gangrene, and even death!

- Wear clothing that covers as much of your body as possible to prevent ticks from reaching your skin; for example, tuck your pants legs into your socks or boots. Check for ticks after each shift where you may have been exposed so that they can be removed before they bite;
- Remove the tick by pulling it straight out or the head can break off. Clean the area immediately with soap and water or alcohol;
- See a doctor if you suspect a problem. Without early treatment, you can experience chronic fatigue, arthritis, and heart abnormalities; and
- There are vaccines available for Lyme disease.

Spiders:

Black widow spider venom is 15 times more poisonous than rattlesnake venom! The brown recluse spider bite can damage body tissues. Watch for signs of spiders when working under houses and in dark basements, attics, or when lifting objects outside, like boards or containers.

- Wear heavy duty gloves when moving piles of brush or wood; and
- If you notice a stinging feeling, sudden nausea, or stomach pain, convulsions, or signs of shock, you may have been bitten by a spider. Seek emergency medical attention immediately.

Caterpillars:

Some varieties of caterpillars can be life threatening. Hidden in their coats are short, hollow spines loaded with poison. When they touch you, the spines break and the poison flows into your skin.

- Signs and symptoms of poisonous caterpillar contact include immediate burning pain, local numbness, swelling, nausea, vomiting, high fever, difficulty breathing and signs of shock. Get emergency medical attention immediately;
- Use adhesive tape to pull the embedded Caterpillar hairs away from your skin. Wash the area thoroughly with soap and water; and
- Stay on the lookout for caterpillars. Most poisonings result from accidental contact. If necessary, spray infested vegetation with an EPA approved insecticide.

***CREEPY CRAWLIES ARE MORE DANGEROUS THAN YOU THINK...
BE AWARE AND BE HAVE A SAFE SUMMER!!***

