Watch Out For Snakes Meeting Kit

WHAT’S AT STAKE

There are many kinds of wildlife that can pose a danger to workers in the North America. Snakes, both venomous and non-venomous, can be a major concern for many different workers across North America. It is important to consider if snakes could be in your work area and what steps need to be taken to prevent any type of injury or incident due to them.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

SNAKE DANGERS ON THE JOB

Many of the bites by venomous snakes occur on the job. There are many workers who are at risk for coming into contact with one of these snakes. Any job that is based outside, especially in warmer climates, are more at risk to come across one of these snakes.

Not all snakes are venomous and the majority of snakes you will see in your lifetime will be non-venomous. There are still hazards created by these kinds of snakes as well. One of these hazards is the sheer surprise or fear that these creatures can create in people.

A bite from a “harmless” snake can cause infection or allergic reaction in some people. For your safety, treat all snakebites as if they were venomous and get to a hospital emergency room as quickly as possible.

WHAT SNAKES ARE VENOMOUS?

Pit vipers. These include rattlesnakes, copperheads, water moccasin and coral snakes.

SYMPTOMS OF A POISONOUS SNAKEBITE

Symptoms vary depending on the species, the amount of venom released, the bite location, and the victim’s age and underlying medical conditions. The following are the most common symptoms:

- Excessive bleeding and difficulty with clotting of blood
- Bloody wound discharge.
- Fang marks in the skin and swelling at the site of the bite.
- Severe pain at the bite site.
- Discoloration, such as redness and bruising.
- Enlarged lymph nodes in the area affected.
- Diarrhea
- Burning
- Convulsions
- Fainting
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Blurred vision
- Excessive sweating
- Fever
- Increased thirst
- Loss of muscle coordination
- Nausea and vomiting
- Numbness and tingling, especially in the mouth
- Rapid pulse
- Altered mental state
- Shock
- Paralysis
- Breathing

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

RECOMMENDED TREATMENT FOR SNAKEBITES

Responding quickly is crucial. While waiting for emergency help do the following:

- Wash the bite with soap and water.
- Cover the area with a clean, cool compress or a moist dressing to ease swelling and discomfort.

- Monitor breathing and heart rate.
- Remove all rings, watches, and constrictive clothing, in case of swelling.
- Note the time of the bite so that it can be reported to an emergency room healthcare provider if needed.
- If possible, try to remember to draw a circle around the affected area and mark the time of the bite and the initial reaction. If you are able, redraw the circle around the site of injury marking the progression of time.
- It is helpful to remember what the snake looks like, its size, and the type of snake if you know it.
- Don’t apply a tourniquet.
- Don’t try to suck the venom out.
- Keep the bite area still and below the victim’s heart. The victim should walk only if absolutely necessary.
- Check and note changes in skin color and temperature near the bite area.
- Remove rings, bracelets, boots, or other tight clothing before swelling begins.
- Clean the wound, but don’t flush with water. Cover the wound with a clean, dry dressing.

BEST WORKER PRACTICES TO AVOID SNAKE BITES

Snake season includes spring, summer, and early fall. Snakes like places that offer a rich supply of food (rodents, frogs, and insects), a place to sun, and a place to hide. They favor abandoned structures, irrigation ditches, tree holes, ground holes, and rock piles. Snake activity depends on the species, environmental temperatures, food source activity, and predator activity. The safest action is to always presume that snakes are active when you are in their territory.

If you’ll be working or walking in snake infested areas, wear protective clothing such as long pants, leather boots, and gloves. Be cautious in tall grass and watch where you step. Walk in areas where the ground is clear so you can see where you step. Don’t reach blindly into rock cracks, wood piles, animal burrows, or under bushes or piles of leaves. Some snakes use camouflage to

hide in plain sight. Look before your sit.

Most snake bites occur when a snake is accidentally stepped on, surprised, or harassed. Many bites occur when a person tries to get a closer look or tries to kill the snake. Just leave snakes alone! If you encounter a snake, stay calm and freeze in place; the snake will often move away. If the snake doesn’t move, then you should slowly walk away, keeping it as far away as possible. Snakes would rather escape from noise or remain hidden.

SNAKE TAKEAWAY AT WORK

Always do a work area inspection prior to starting work. Look for signs of wildlife in your work area and always be careful when moving materials outdoors where wildlife can live.

FINAL WORD

Use common sense when you’re in areas known for snake activity. Keep in mind that an unprovoked snake doesn’t want trouble any more than you do. Caution and respect are your best weapons against snakebites.