Wildlife Safety Precautions Meeting Kit

What’s At Stake

WILDLIFE DANGERS IN THE WORKPLACE SAFETY

There are many different types of hazards wildlife in a work area can create. From ticks to deer and every kind of insect or animal in between, each can pose some type of hazard at work. It is important to recognize the dangers these creatures can create in the workplace.

What’s the Danger

COMMON WILDLIFE DANGER STATISTICS

There are common types of wildlife that are a major source of different injuries or illnesses in the United States.

- The Insurance Information Institute reports that over 1 .6 million deer-vehicle collisions occur each year and these accidents cause vehicle damage, injuries, and even fatalities at a cost in the neighborhood of $4.6 billion.
- Over 300,000 people are diagnosed with Lyme disease from tick bites each year in the United States according to the CDC.
- According to UF Wildlife, approximately 7,000 to 8,000 individuals are bitten by poisonous snakes in the U.S. each year.
- According to NIOSH, thousands of people are stung by insects each year, and as many as 90–100 people in the United States die as a result of allergic reactions.
- Mosquitos are the deadliest creature worldwide. They kill around 725,000 people a year.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

PROTECTION/PREVENTION – BEST PRACTICES

1. Know your local wildlife.

- Ticks and other insects tend to live in areas that have high grass or are wooded.
- Mosquitoes are present around areas of standing water.
- If you work in a more urban environment, you are more likely to encounter stray dogs and raccoons.
- Snakes are found all over the world in different environments.

2. Take preventative steps.

- Clear the worksite to decrease the likelihood that animals will stay in the area.
    - Snakes like to hide under leaf and wood piles.
    - Large amounts of trash may attract stray dogs or raccoons.
    - Cut grass to keep ticks out.
    - Remove standing water to discourage mosquito reproduction.
- Wear the appropriate clothing for your work environment to reduce tick and other insect bites.
- Use insect repellant to reduce the chance of receiving insect bites.
- Keep a first aid kit on site.

3. Interact appropriately with wildlife.

- Avoid feeding them as they will learn to come around the worksite more often.
- If you are bitten by an animal, seek medical attention.
- Get information about the animal that bit you and give it to local animal control authorities.
- If an animal appears aggressive or needs to be removed, retreat to a safe location and contact animal control.

WILDLIFE SAFETY PROTECTION – WHAT TO DO AND NOT DO

- Wild animals generally avoid human contact, but if you do see an animal in the wild, maintain your distance. Don’t attempt to feed, catch, or pet a wild animal. Never approach wildlife babies or animal mothers with their babies; the mother’s protective response can be very fierce. Report injured or aggressive animals to authorities; don’t attempt to give aid to injured wildlife. If an injured animal approaches you, move slowly away.
- Hungry, diseased, or injured animals as well as animals that have become habituated to humans can lose their intuition and do things they wouldn’t normally do, including approaching a human.
- Animals are drawn to work sites by the food and waste humans leave exposed. On work sites, food should be kept tightly stored and garbage put away in double plastic bags or animal-resistant bins.
- Humans create areas that draw in carnivores. When land is cleared, grassy areas, we attract carnivores who want to feed on berry bushes and grasses and on the prey species that are also drawn to the new open areas. These cleared areas also provide new pathways for animals.
- Wild animals need their space and workers must be careful not to violate it too much. When they see wild animals, especially younger ones, people tend to want to get closer. Where there are young animals, the parents are nearby and can become quite aggressive, whether they’re bears, moose, caribou, or another animal.
- When animals have offspring, their defensive mechanisms become even greater. Keep your distance. If you want to watch, use binoculars instead of trying to get a selfie. Humans must understand that wild animals are wild and because they are wild, they can be unpredictable. It’s up to us to use our common sense to avoid any of the risks that may occur as a result of our interference with where they live.
- All workers who work in animal habitat should receive bear and wildlife safety training and learn how to be perceptive of their surroundings.

- Never feed or approach wild animals. If an animal approaches you, it is your responsibility to move away to maintain a safe distance. Always give a wild animal an easy route to get away from you.
- Wildlife encounters can expose you to rabies, a disease that causes brain swelling and death. Avoiding animals is the best prevention for rabies, but if you are bitten, scratched, or licked by a wild animal, wash the area with soap and water immediately.
- As a last means of defense against aggressive animals, pepper spray can be used. To be effective, it must be sprayed directly into the animal's face.
- For safety, keep your distance and keep your cool when encountering wild animals.

FINAL WORD

Workers in remote or regions where travel is difficult must learn how to respond to encounters including attacks by all sorts of wild animal from coyotes, racoons, or bears while working.