

Don't Brush Off a Bug Bite or Insect Sting

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Outdoor workers are at risk of being stung by flying insects (bees, wasps, and hornets) and fire ants. While most stings cause only mild discomfort, some may result in severe allergic reactions that require immediate medical care and may cause death. Additionally, distractions posed by insects are safety hazards.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

Insect and spider bites can be a source of irritation, infection and allergies. Irritation includes itching and pain which can cause distractions on the job site and lead to more serious accidents. Many people have suffered injuries, such as falling off a ladder, after being startled or stung/bitten by an insect. Secondary infections of the skin from bites and stings may require medical attention and cause time off from work. The most severe reaction to insect bites and stings can be fatal and results from allergic reactions to wasp, yellow-jacket or bee stings. Some insects, such as lice, houseflies, deer flies, mosquitoes (which famously carry dengue and yellow fever), ticks (which commonly carry Lyme disease) and chiggers, carry diseases. If you are bit or stung by a disease-carrying insect, you may contract the disease. Serious bites from the black widow or brown recluse spiders can also make you sick. If the person is complaining of stomach pain, sore muscles, tender feet, swollen eyelids, excessive saliva or sweating, the cause might be a black widow spider bite. Get the person to a hospital immediately.

EXAMPLE

A construction team was doing a remodel project on an old house and were tearing up an old wooden porch. The eager workers began tearing into the wooden planks before doing a thorough inspection as to what was underneath. Within seconds of demolishing the stairs they were surrounded by a nest of angry yellow jackets that repeatedly stung the men. Many of the workers suffered a toxic reaction to the multiple stings and one worker died from anaphylaxis.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- If you know you are allergic to bees or wasps, you need to see a doctor to get a prescription for an adrenaline pen (EpiPen) and carry it with you at all times. If you have never before had an allergic reaction to an insect bite, yet a recent sting or bite causes wheezing, shortness of breath, throat tightness, chest tightness or pain, difficulty swallowing, faintness, weakness or numbness/tingling in the affected limb, seek medical care immediately.
- Constant distractions posed by insects while working outside can also pose a hazard to your safety. Such unpredictable distractions are especially dangerous if you are operating large industrial powered vehicles or machinery, or working at heights.
- Keep your eyes open for insect nests or webs when walking outside.
- Wear long-sleeved, light-colored clothing with shirt collars buttoned up and pant cuffs tucked into your boots or socks when working outdoors. Wear gloves and use insect repellent.
- Badly-infested areas may need to be sprayed with a bug-killing agent before work begins. Make sure the area is well ventilated before you re-enter it.
- Check your clothing and skin for ticks or unwanted pests after completing your work tasks.

FINAL WORD

OSHA says agriculture has been one of the top three most dangerous vocations for the past 40 years. Pay attention to your surroundings, treat minor wounds with care and know when and how to take action should a more serious incident occur.

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Job Name: _____ Date: _____

Questions:

1. A bee or wasp sting is annoying, but it's never fatal.

True False

2. Insects that startle or sting workers can cause serious injuries associated with falls or contact with moving machinery or tools.

True False

3. If you experience shortness of breath, throat tightness, chest pain, limb numbness after being bitten or stung. What should you do?

4. Only allergic reactions to venom can cause a person to die.

True False

Meeting Attended By:

Please print name here.

Initial here.

Please print name here.	Initial here.

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____