



OUTDOOR HAZARDS

Protection against insects, snakes, and more

With summer around the corner, it's the perfect time to think about nature's exposures and how they may affect you while working outdoors. This Safety Talk provides valuable prevention measures on a variety of insects, snakes, and more.

MOSQUITOS

Mosquitos can transmit deadly viruses, such as Zika, malaria, yellow fever, and West Nile.



PREVENTION

The best way to protect yourself is to avoid mosquito bites by:

- Using an [EPA-registered repellent](#)
- Treating clothing and gear with Permethrin (.5%).
- Wearing long sleeves and long pants when working outdoors.



IF BITTEN

Common symptoms include soft bumps on the skin that may become pink, red, and itchy.

- Wash area with soap and water.
- Apply ice pack for 10 minutes to reduce swelling and itching.
- Apply a mixture of baking soda and water to help reduce the itch or use anti-itch cream.

Call **911** if you have an onset of flu-like symptoms, stiff muscles, confusion, seizures, partial paralysis.

Source Content: [Centers for Disease Control & National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health](#)

VENOMOUS SPIDERS

The black widow and brown recluse spiders are the only two venomous spiders found in the U.S. They often live in dry undisturbed areas and find their way inside buildings, control boxes, sheds, and wood piles.

The **BLACK WIDOW** is about 1/2-1 inch long with a red hourglass marking on its underside and is shiny black with a large round abdomen.

The **BROWN RECLUSE** is also about 1/2-1 inch long, solid light brown, and no markings, patterns, or spots on the tail end.



PREVENTION

- Shake out clothing, shoes, towels, before use.
- Wear protective clothing (long-sleeved shirt and long pants, hat, gloves, and boots).
- Reduce debris and trim tall grass from around outdoor work areas.
- Keep tetanus boosters up-to-date (every 10 years). Spider bites can become infected with tetanus spores.

IF BITTEN

Symptoms may include itching, rash, site pain, muscle pain, blistering, sweating, difficulty breathing, headache, nausea, fever, chills, and high blood pressure.

- Try to identify the type of spider, this will aid in medical treatment.
- Notify your supervisor and call **911** if symptoms become severe.
- Wash bite area with soap and water.
- Apply a cold cloth to the bite area to reduce swelling.
- Elevate bite area if possible.
- Do not attempt to remove venom.

VENOMOUS SNAKES

The only venomous snakes in California are the eight species of rattlesnakes. Most snake bites occur between April and October. If you work outdoors, be prepared to encounter snakes in the brush, bushes, around rocks, wood piles, tool sheds, pump stations, or even walking along a path.

PREVENTION

The CDC advises the following:

- If you encounter any snake, do NOT handle it. Leave it alone and notify other workers of the snake's location.
- Wear work boots, leather gloves, and long pants when working outdoors.
- Be aware that snakes are more active in warm weather and at night.
- Make noise because snakes will tend to avoid the noise.



IF BITTEN

- Move the bitten person well away from the snake's reach to avoid additional bites.
- Stay Calm! Call **911**. Always treat snakebites as an emergency!
- Notify your supervisor and other employees.

- Typically, you will see two fang marks, but the absence of visible fang marks is not evidence of a lack of a venomous snake bite.



- Restrict movement and keep the bite area below the heart. Above the heart will increase the heart rate and increase the movement of venom through the body.
- If possible, wash the bite area with soap and water as soon as possible.
- Cover wound with clean, dry bandage.
- If EMS is not readily available, apply first aid and begin transport of the victim to the nearest hospital emergency room.
- If possible, take a picture of the snake but do not approach the snake.

WHAT NOT TO DO

- DO NOT wait to seek immediate medical attention if bitten.
- DO NOT attempt to capture or kill the snake.
- DO NOT cut bite wounds and/or attempt to suck out the venom.
- DO NOT constrict blood flow. Allowing blood flow will dilute the toxin and likely reduce tissue damage.
 - Don't apply ice to the bite area.
 - Don't apply a tourniquet.
 - Don't immerse in water or other liquids.
 - Don't drink alcohol or caffeinated beverages.



BEES, WASPS, AND HORNETS

Bees, wasps, and hornets are most abundant in the warmer months. Nests and hives may be found in trees, under roof eaves, or on equipment such as ladders.



Honey
Bee

Bumble
Bee

Wasp

Hornet

PREVENTION

- Avoid perfumed toiletries.
- Wear clothing to cover as much of the body as possible.
- Keep work areas clear of discarded food.
- Remain calm and still if a bee is flying around. Swatting may cause it to sting.
- If attacked by several bees, run and try to get indoors or in a vehicle.

IF STUNG

In most cases symptoms include burning pain at the sting site with red welt and small white spot at puncture site.

- Wash the site with soap and water.
- Remove stinger using gauze wiped over the area or by scraping a fingernail over the area. Never squeeze the stinger or use tweezers.
- Apply ice to reduce swelling.
- Do not scratch the sting as this may increase swelling, itching, and risk of infection.
- Call **911** immediately if you or a coworker has an allergic reaction. Symptoms include:
 - Hives, itching, flushed or pale skin.
 - Difficulty breathing and swelling of the throat and tongue.
 - A weak, rapid pulse.
 - Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
 - Dizziness, fainting, or loss of consciousness.

TICKS

Ticks are tiny insects that live in tall grass or shrubs and often ride on deer, dogs, mice, or people. Tick activity peaks during the summer months. Worksites with wood, bushes, high grass, or leaf litter are likely to have more ticks.

PREVENTION

When working in these environments, CDC recommends:

- Wear a hat and tuck your pants into your boots or socks.
- Always use insect repellents that provide protection from tick bites
- Check your skin and clothes at the end of your shift.

IF BITTEN

1. Sanitize bite area and tweezers.
2. Grab tick close to the head and pull up slowly.
3. Sanitize bite area again.



About [Lyme Disease](#)

Lyme disease is the most common vector-borne disease in the U.S. It is transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected blacklegged tick. Most cases can be treated with antibiotics, especially if treatment is started early.

Seek medical attention promptly if you develop symptoms of body/muscle aches, fever, headaches, fatigue, joint pain, rash, stiff neck, and facial paralysis. Tell your health care provider about working outdoors in an area where ticks may be present.

POISONOUS PLANTS

Employees who work outdoors are at risk of exposure to poisonous plants, such as Poison Oak, Poison Ivy, and Poison Sumac.

Poison Oak is the primary poisonous plant in California. It can be found in the forest, fields, along streams, roadsides, and even in urban environments.



When in contact with skin, the leaf's sap oil (urushiol) can cause an allergic reaction. Burning these poisonous plants produces smoke that, when inhaled, can cause lung irritation.

Employees may be exposed through:

- Direct contact with the plant.
- Indirect contact (touching tools, animals, or clothing with urushiol on them).
- Inhalation of particles containing urushiol from burning plants.

PREVENTION

- Wear long sleeves, long pants, boots, and gloves.
- Wash exposed clothing separately in hot water with detergent.
- Barrier skin creams, such as lotion containing Bantoquatam, may offer some protection.
- After use, clean tools with rubbing alcohol or soap and lots of water. Urushiol can remain active on the surface of objects for up to 5 years. Wear disposable gloves during this process.
- Do not burn plants or brush piles that may contain poison oak. Inhaling smoke from burning plants can cause severe allergic respiratory problems.
- When exposure to burning poison oak is unavoidable review the guidance at [NIOSH Poisonous Plants Fast Facts](#).

IF EXPOSED

Symptoms of skin contact include:

- Red rash within a few days of contact
- Swelling and itching
- Possible bumps, patches, and streaking
- Possible weeping blisters. Blister fluids are not contagious



If you are exposed to Poison Oak:

- Immediately rinse skin with rubbing alcohol, poison plant wash, or degreasing soap (such as dishwashing soap) or detergent, and lots of water. Rinse frequently so that wash solutions do not dry on the skin and further spread the urushiol.
- Scrub under nails with a brush.
- Apply wet compresses, calamine lotion, or hydrocortisone cream to the skin to reduce itching and blistering. Oatmeal baths may relieve itching as well.
- An antihistamine may help relieve itching but remember drowsiness may occur.
- In severe cases, or if the rash is on the face or genitals, seek professional medical attention.
- Call 911 or go to a hospital emergency room if you have a severe allergic reaction, such as swelling, difficulty breathing, or if you've had a severe reaction in the past.

This *Safety Talk* provides awareness level training on a variety of outdoor hazards. If this information is unclear or if you have any additional questions, please talk to your supervisor.