

Weekly Safety Briefings

Week 17: April 21-25, 2025

Snake Safety

Introduction

As the weather begins to warm up, the critters begin to come out. There are many different types of wildlife that pose a threat in the workplace. Snakes in particular can be a major concern in many regions across the globe. It is vitally important to be aware of the potential threat to your employees and to take the proper steps to avoid and react in case of a snake related incident.

Monday – How to Avoid

Not all snakes are venomous and in fact, most of the snakes you will most likely encounter will be non-venomous. However even those snakes could pose a threat due to the element of fear and surprise. Today we will discuss precautions you can take to avoid a snake related injury.

- The main way to avoid a bite by a snake is to just leave the snake alone. If removal is necessary contact a professional to remove the snake, especially if you think it is poisonous.
- Always wear protective toe boots, long pants, and a long shirt when working in areas where snakes are normally found. Clothing will help reduce the impact of a snake's bite.
- 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.

Tuesday– Signs and Symptoms of a snake bite

You may think it would be obvious if you were bitten by a snake but that is not always the case. Today we will discuss the signs and symptoms of a snake bite so proper steps can be taken to provide treatment.

- A pair of puncture marks at the wound
- Redness and swelling around the bite
- Severe pain at the sight of the bite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Labored breathing
- Increased salivation and sweating
- Numbness and tingling around the face and/or limbs

Wednesday – What to Do if Bitten

Yesterday we reviewed the signs and symptoms of snake bites. Today will we discuss the proper steps to take to care for the victim of a snake bite.

1. Attempt to identify the type of snake. This will help medical professionals apply the correct anti-venom quickly if the snake is venomous. Take care to avoid another person being bitten.
2. Keep the bitten person as calm as possible. This helps reduce the spread of venom and the onset of shock.
3. Wash the bite area with disinfectant if available.
4. Remove jewelry and tight-fitting clothing from the bite area before the onset of swelling.
5. Reduce or prevent movement of the bitten extremity and position below the heart. This helps decrease the spread of the venom.

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6. Get the victim to a medical facility as quickly and safely as possible.

Thursday – What Not to Do if Bitten

Just as important as knowing the right steps to take is to avoid well intentioned efforts that could make matters worse. Today we will discuss steps that may seem helpful but could cause more damage.

1. Do not make incisions over the bite marks.
2. Do not use a tourniquet or other constricting devices except in extreme cases of envenomation and only if properly trained in the technique.
3. Do not use aspirin or related medications to relieve pain, because they increase bleeding.

Friday – Discussion

This week we've discussed important steps for avoiding a snake related injury, how to identify a snake bite, the proper steps for treatment as well as steps to avoid. Now let's open it up to the group to share your experiences.

- Have you or anyone you know been bitten by a snake?
- How do you protect your home against snakes?
- Have you seen snakes in your workplace?
- Are there any particulate areas that you see them repeatedly?