



STAT



Safety Talk and Tips

Eastern Region's Environmental Safety and Health Newsletter

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Summer Safety Hazards

In this issue of STAT, your ES&H Advisory Board wanted to raise the awareness that summer often brings a new array of safety concerns.

At this time of year, employees need to protect themselves from the hazards associated with summer heat and storms. During the summer, spending more time outdoors also brings us in much closer contact with many creatures that share our world and that can pose a danger to us. In this issue, we will address some of these hazards.



June is National Safety Month

This June, get set to Make a Difference!

"**Make a Difference**" is the theme of National Safety Council's (NSC) 2008 National Safety Month observance.

Throughout June 2008, National Safety Month activities will address the most significant reasons for unintentional injuries and deaths in the American workplace, on the road and in the home and community. We will offer tools and materials that can help you and your organization Make a Difference in both on and off the job safety.

To help with the planning of your offices' series of safety related activities, the NSC offer this schedule of National Safety Month weekly topics:

- **Week 1: June 2-6** [Emergency Preparedness](#)
- **Week 2: June 9-13** [Distracted Driving](#)
- **Week 3: June 16-20** [Poisoning Prevention](#)
- **Week 4: June 23-27** [Fall Prevention](#)



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More information including downloadable safety posters can be found at the following web site:

<http://www.nsc.org/nsm/>

Protecting Workers from the Effects Of Heat

Protect Yourself from the Summer Heat

The summer season poses a special hazard for those working outdoors or in buildings that are not air conditioned who need to protect themselves from dangerous combination of heat and humidity. If your body is not able to maintain a normal temperature, heat related illnesses and even death can occur. Here is a list of factors that make it hard for your body to maintain a normal temperature.

- Hot temperatures
- High humidity
- Direct sunlight
- Little or no air movement
- Physical exertion
- Poor physical health
- Some medications

DEFINITIONS

The following are some terms that are used to describe various levels of a heat related illness.

Heat Cramps: Occurs as a result of hard physical labor and is attributed to an electrolyte imbalance. In many cases this occurs due to lack of water replenishment which degrades the cooling mechanism of the body.

Heat Exhaustion: Occurs as a result of a combination of excessive heat and dehydration which could result in fainting or heat collapse. Warning signs and symptoms include headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness, thirst, and possibly giddiness.

Heat Stroke: This most serious heat related illness occurs as a result of an increase in body temperature to critical levels. *This is a medical emergency that could result in death!* The primary signs and symptoms include confusion, irrational behavior, loss of consciousness, convulsions, hot skin, an abnormally high body temperature and usually a lack of sweating. If a person shows signs of heat stroke, seek medical attention immediately by calling 911.



Here are some tips that can reduce your chance of a heat related illness

- Wear lightweight, light colored, loose-fitting clothes.
- Drink at least one cup of water every 15 minutes.
- At the most only eat only a small meal before working outside.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol or large amounts of sugar.
- Reduce physical exertion.
- Take frequent breaks, preferably in the shade or an air conditioned building.
- Avoid being in the sun as much as possible.
- Work outside during the early morning hours rather than the middle of the day. Or better yet, work in an air conditioned building on days when the heat index is expected to be 105 degrees or greater.
- Slowly increase the time spent in high heat and humidity conditions so that your body can adapt.
- Know the signs and symptoms of heat related illnesses.



After the Flood...

Each year, devastating floods affect many areas of the country. Restoring calm and normalcy to everyday life after such events can be exhausting and dangerous.

GENERAL RULES FOR CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

- Wash exposed skin frequently in purified water. Wear rubber gloves to protect against contamination and skin irritation.
- Try using a pump-up garden sprayer or hose to remove layers of mud from hard surfaces.
- Scrub with a household cleaner/detergent solution and a brush to remove remaining surface oil. Rinse with clean water.
- Wash with a disinfectant, such as chlorine bleach, pine oil or a phenolic product, such as Lysol. Remember, a product is considered to be a "disinfectant" only if it is labeled as such. Rinse well.
- Dry items thoroughly to prevent mildew growth.
- Sanitize dishes, cooking utensils and food preparation areas before using them.

Some of the hazards associated with working in flooded areas include:

- ✦ Electrical hazards
- ✦ Carbon monoxide
- ✦ Musculoskeletal hazards
- ✦ Thermal stresses
- ✦ Heavy equipment operation
- ✦ Structural instability
- ✦ Hazardous materials
- ✦ Fire
- ✦ Drowning
- ✦ Hypothermia due to the cold weather and water exposure
- ✦ Falls from heights
- ✦ Burns from energized line contact or equipment failure
- ✦ Exhaustion from working extended shifts
- ✦ Dehydration
- ✦ Biohazards

Information provided courtesy of WWW.OSHA.GOV



REMOVING MOLD AND MILDEW

- Brush off mold and mildew growth on household items outdoors to prevent scattering of spores in the house.
- Vacuum floors, ceilings and walls to remove mildew. Then wash surfaces with a detergent/household cleaner and water solution.
- Wipe mildew-stained areas with a cloth dampened with a solution of 1 cup of chlorine bleach or rubbing or denatured alcohol to 1 gallon water. Pine-based or phenolic products also work well.

PREVENTING MILDEW GROWTH

- Use an air conditioner, dehumidifier or heater, if available, to remove moisture. Use fans to circulate air and open all windows.
- Turn on electric lights in closets and leave doors open to dry the dampness and humidity.
- Spray with a fungicide or other mildew preventive product. Read and follow instructions and precautions on product label. Dry thoroughly.

Information from: University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension, Illinois Cooperative Extension Service, Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension Service

Flood Cleanup Tips :

- Before working in flooded areas, be sure your tetanus shot is current.*
- Consider all water unsafe until local authorities notify the public that the water supply is safe.*
- Do not use contaminated water to wash and prepare food, brush teeth, etc.*
- Keep an adequate supply of safe water available for washing and drinking.*
- Use extreme caution with potential chemical and electric hazards.*
- If the safety of a food or beverage is in question, throw it out.*
- Seek immediate medical care for all animal bites.*

Information provided courtesy of WWW.OSHA.GOV

Spiders, Ants, and Snakes! OH MY!

Snakes

Snake Bite Prevention

- Be cautious about where your hands and feet are placed. Do not put your hands in holes or under objects (i.e., lumber, scrap metal, overturned boats) without first being sure that a snake is not located underneath.
- Do not sit or lay down in vegetation or other situations where there may be any doubt about the presence of snakes.
- Wear proper foot gear, such as hightop leather boots and leather gloves when handling materials mentioned above.
- Do not attempt to capture, tease or handle venomous snakes. Involuntary nervous activity may allow snakes to bite for up to an hour after they appear to have been “killed.”
- A snake’s striking distance is about 1/2 the total length of the snake.



Snake Bite Treatment

- The first step in snakebite treatment is to avoid panic. Keep bite victims still and calm to slow the spread of venom in case the snake is poisonous. Seek medical attention as soon as possible.
- If bitten, note the color and shape of the snake to help with treatment.
- Do not cut the wound or attempt to suck out the venom. Never allow the victim to drink alcohol.
- Apply first aid: lay the person down so that the bite is below the level of the heart and cover the bite with a clean, dry dressing.

Fire Ants

Fire ants attack anything that disturbs their mound (nest). They firmly grasp skin with their jaws, and then sting and inject venom. Fire ants resemble ordinary ants. They average 1/8 to 1/4 inch in length and are reddish brown to black in color. Fire ants display aggressive behavior and they build mound-shaped nests.



Symptoms of a Fire Ant Bite

The sting of a fire ant develops into a pustule (small, firm blister-like sore) in 24-48 hours. These pustules can become sites of secondary infection. Fire ant venom may cause a severe reaction in hypersensitive individuals, including nausea, shock, chest pains, and in rare cases, coma.

Fire Ant Prevention/Treatment

- Be aware – don’t stand on ant nests or areas where they are foraging.
- Wear boots and/or tuck pant legs into your socks to reduce the risk of bite/sting.
- Use insect repellants, such as DEET or Picaridin, on clothing and footwear.
- If attacked, leave area immediately while brushing off ants with the use of a gloved hand or by using a cloth.
- Consult your pharmacist for treatment of minor bites and irritation.
- Seek immediate medical attention, particularly if you feel short of breath or have swelling.



Spiders



The Black Widow

The black widow belongs to a group of spiders commonly known as cobweb spiders. The characteristic hourglass is located on the underside of the abdomen. Female black widows are dangerous and can bite and inject toxic venom. The black widow is commonly found in the following places:

- *Outdoors* - woodpiles, rubble piles, under stones, in hollow stumps, and in rodent burrows, privies, sheds and garages.
- *Indoors* - undisturbed, cluttered areas in basements and crawl spaces.

Symptoms of a Black Widow bite:

- The bite of the black widow may be painful or it may go unnoticed.
- The skin may display one or two bite marks with local swelling. Pain usually progresses from the bite site and eventually to the abdomen and back.
- Severe cramping or rigidity may occur in the abdominal muscles. Other symptoms may include nausea, profuse perspiration, tremors, labored breathing, restlessness, increased blood pressure and fever.
- The pain from the bite will usually persist for the first 8-12 hours.
- Symptoms may continue for several days.



The Brown Recluse

The brown recluse belongs to a group of spiders commonly known as violin spiders or fiddlebacks. The characteristic fiddle-shaped pattern is located on the top of the leg attachment region. Because they are secluded and withdrawn, as their name implies, the brown recluse avoids open spaces. Brown recluse spiders are dangerous and they can bite and inject toxic venom.

Symptoms of a Brown Recluse bite:

- The severity of the bite may vary. Symptoms may vary from none to very severe.
- The bite generally becomes reddened within several hours. There is often a systemic reaction within 24-36 hours characterized by restlessness, fever, chills, nausea, weakness and joint pain.
- Tissue at the site of the bite and the surrounding area dies and eventually sheds.

Protection from Spiders

- Wear a long-sleeved shirt, hat, gloves, and boots when handling stored boxes, firewood, lumber and rocks, etc.
- Inspect and shake out clothing and shoes before getting dressed.
- Use insect repellants, such as DEET or Picaridin, on clothing and footwear.

Treatment of spider bites

- Clean the bite area with soap and water.
- Apply ice to the bite area to slow absorption of the venom.
- Elevate and immobilize the bitten extremity.
- Capture the spider, if at all possible, for identification purposes.
- Seek medical attention.



About this Newsletter

This newsletter is brought to you on a quarterly basis by the Eastern Region Environmental Safety and Health Advisory Board to help increase awareness of the importance of the safety and health programs within the Department of Commerce, NOAA, and the National Weather Service. Your comments are welcome. Please send all comments to Kevin Murray.

REMEMBER, SAFETY FIRST!