

DOAS Loss Control Bulletin

March 2015

Topic of the Month...Bugs and Critters



Each year, Georgia State employees are bitten and/or stung by bees, spiders, ticks, chiggers, dogs, cats, snakes, mosquitos and more. Besides dealing with the heat while outdoors, we also must be aware of these other aspects. Many of these encounters are not preventable, but many could be prevented. When a mosquito or tick bites, it may transfer a disease-causing agent, such as a parasite, bacterium, or virus. Venomous snakes, spiders, scorpions, and stinging insects can be found in most of Georgia. They are especially dangerous to workers who have allergies to the animal. Anaphylactic shock is the body's severe allergic reaction to a bite or sting and requires immediate emergency care. Thousands of people are stung each year, and as many as 40–50 people in the United States die each year from severe allergic reactions. Venomous snakes include rattlesnakes, copperheads, cottonmouths/water moccasins, and coral snakes. Stinging insects include bees, wasps, hornets, and fire ants. Venomous spiders include black widows, brown recluse spiders, and hobo spiders.

Prevention Tips: Ticks: cover up, tuck your pants into your socks or boots (limit exposed skin), lighten up! (light color clothing makes it easier to see them); use an insect repellent on clothing. **Chiggers:** When in wooded areas that may be chigger-infested, try not to brush up against vegetation. When hiking, walk in the center of trails, rather than along the sides. Wear long sleeves and long pants that can be tucked into your socks or shoes. Use insect or tick repellent, especially around the tops of your shoes, shirt neck, cuffs, and waistband. Shower as soon as you go indoors. Wash your clothes in hot water. **Spiders:** preventive steps: Inspect or shake out any clothing, shoes, towels, or equipment before use. Wear protective clothing such as a long-sleeved shirt and long pants, hat, gloves, and boots when handling stacked or undisturbed piles of materials. Minimize the empty spaces between stacked materials. Remove and reduce debris and rubble from around the outdoor work areas. Trim or eliminate tall grasses from around outdoor work areas. Store apparel and outdoor equipment in tightly closed plastic bags. Keep your tetanus boosters up-to-date (every 10 years). Spider bites can become infected with tetanus spores.



Bees: Minimize your exposure; take care when drinking sweet beverages outside. Wide, open cups may be your best option because you can see if a bee is in them. Inspect cans and straws before drinking from them. Tightly cover food containers and trash cans. Clear away garbage, fallen fruit, and dog or other animal feces (flies can attract wasps). Wear close-toed shoes when walking outside. Don't wear bright colors or floral prints, which can attract bees. Don't wear loose clothing, which can trap bees between the cloth and your skin. When driving, keep your windows rolled up. Be careful when mowing the lawn or trimming vegetation, activities that might arouse insects in a beehive or wasp nest. Have hives and nests near your area removed by a professional. **Snakes:** Avoid places where snakes may live. These places include tall grass or brush, rocky areas, fallen logs, bluffs, swamps, marshes, and deep holes in the ground. When moving through tall grass or weeds, poke at the ground in front of you with a long stick to scare away snakes. Wear chaps if there is a high probability of snakes in the area. Watch where you step and where you sit when outdoors. Wear loose, long pants and high, thick leather or rubber boots. Shine a flashlight on your path when walking outside at night. Never handle a snake, even if you think it is dead. Recently killed snakes may still bite by reflex. **Dogs:** [Have owner secure animal before your arrival if possible.](#) Be polite and respect the dog's personal space. Never approach an unfamiliar dog, especially one who's tied or confined behind a fence or in a car. Don't pet a dog—even your own—without letting him see and sniff you first. Don't disturb a dog while she's sleeping, eating, chewing on a toy, or caring for puppies. Be cautious around strange dogs. Always assume that a dog who doesn't know you may see you as an intruder or a threat. **Cats:** Generally will stay away from strangers. If cornered will bite and scratch. Cat bites are serious injuries and require prompt medical attention. [This is by no means a comprehensive list of bite prevention measures.](#)

Thanks for your time. Let's work together to make Georgia a safer place to work.