Snakes in the Workplace Meeting Kit



What's at Stake?

There are many different kinds of wildlife that can pose a danger to workers in the North America. Different geographical regions deal with different types of wildlife. Snakes, both venomous and non-venomous, can be a major concern for many different workers across North America. It is important to consider if snakes could be in your work area and what steps need to be taken to prevent any type of injury or incident due to them.

What's the Danger?

Some countries have many more types of venomous snakes than others. There are still a few kinds of venomous snakes found throughout North America including rattlesnakes, copperheads, cottonmouths/water moccasins, and coral snakes. It is estimated that around 7,000 to 8,000 people are bitten by venomous snakes each year in the United States alone. However, due to effective anti-venom and medical treatment only an average of 5 people die as a result of a bite.

While many of the bites by venomous snakes occur off the job and a large number of the people who are bit are children, there are many workers who are at risk for coming into contact with one of these snakes. Any job that is based outside, especially in warmer climates, are more at risk to come across one of these snakes.

Obviously not all snakes are venomous and the majority of snakes you will see in your lifetime will be non-venomous. There are still hazards created by these kinds of snakes as well. One of these hazards is the sheer surprise or fear that these creatures can create in people. For example, you are moving sheet metal next to a garage. You pull up the last piece of sheet metal only to find a five foot long black snake inches away from your hand. You jump back, trip over a pipe, and smack your head requiring stitches. Also, some snakes like a black snake have small jagged teeth that can leave lacerations that may need medical attention if bitten.

How to Protect Yourself

- 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 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.

FINAL WORD

Outdoor workers can experience a number of hazards. One often unexpected hazard is a venomous snakebite. Venomous snakes may be encountered in workplaces throughout the United States.

Source: https://www.safetytalkideas.com/safetytalks/snakes-in-the-workplace/