

June 1
2021

SAFETY MATTERS

Protecting Yourself from Stinging Insects

Hazards and Tips for Prevention

Flying Insects

Outdoor workers are at risk of being stung by flying insects (bees, wasps, and hornets) and fire ants. While most stings cause only mild discomfort, some may result in severe allergic reactions that require immediate medical care.



First Aid

If a worker is stung by a stinging insect:

- Have someone stay with the worker to be sure that they do not have an allergic reaction.
- Wash the site with soap and water.
- Remove the 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.

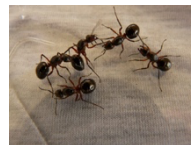
Protect Yourself

- Wear light-colored, smooth-finished clothing.
- Avoid perfumed soaps, shampoos, and deodorants.
 - Do not wear cologne or perfume.
- Wear clean clothing and bathe at least daily.
- Wear clothing to cover as much of the body as possible.

- Avoid flowering plants.
- Keep work areas clean. Some insects are attracted to discarded food.
- Remain calm and still if a single stinging insect is flying around. (Swatting may cause it to sting.)
- If attacked by several stinging insects, run to get away; bees release a chemical when they sting that attracts other bees.
 - Go indoors.
 - Shaded areas are better than open areas.
 - Do not jump into water. Some insects (ex. Africanized honeybees) are known to hover above the water in wait.
- If an insect is inside your vehicle, stop slowly and open all the windows.
- Workers with a history of severe allergic reactions to insect bites or stings should carry an epinephrine autoinjector and wear medical ID jewelry stating their allergy.

Fire Ants

Fire ants bite and sting. They are aggressive when stinging and inject



venom, which causes a burning sensation. Red bumps form at the sting, and within a day or two they become white fluid-filled pustules.

First Aid

- Rub off ants briskly, as they will attach to the skin with their jaws.
- Antihistamines may help.
 - Follow directions on packaging.
 - Drowsiness may occur.
- Seek immediate medical attention if a sting causes severe chest pain, nausea, severe sweating, loss of breath, serious swelling, or slurred speech.

Protect Yourself

- Do not disturb ant mounds.
- Be careful when lifting items (including animal carcasses) off the ground, as they may be covered in ants.
- Fire ants may be found on trees and in water, so always look over the area before starting to work.
- Tuck pants into socks or boots.
- Workers with a history of severe allergic reactions to insect bites or stings should carry an epinephrine autoinjector and wear medical ID jewelry stating their allergy.

For additional information, please contact your California Schools JPA Risk Manager. Sources: "Protecting Yourself from Stinging Insects." (CDC) *NIOSH Publication No. 2010-117*, <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2010-117/pdfs/2010-117>

