Snakes, bees and scorpions toolbox talk

Weather and environment · about 5 minutes · read it out, or say it in your own words

SITE OR JOB	DATE	PRESENTER

South African sites on new stands, farms and the edges of towns regularly turn up snakes, bee swarms and scorpions in stacked material, rubble, long grass and pipes. Most bites and stings happen when a hand or foot goes where the worker cannot see, or when someone tries to kill or catch the animal.

SAY THIS

Where they hide

Snakes and scorpions like dark, sheltered places: under stacked bricks, timber and sheeting, in rubble and long grass, inside pipes and empty containers, and in boots and clothes left on the ground. Bees often build hives in cavities in walls, roofs, meter boxes and old drums. Before you lift or reach, look. Wear gloves when moving material, and lift it so it opens away from you. Shake out boots and clothes before you put them on.

If you see a snake

Stop, then back away slowly and give it room. Do not try to kill it, catch it or throw things at it. That is when most people get bitten. Warn the people around you, keep watching where it goes from a safe distance, and call the supervisor so a trained snake handler can be called. A photo from a safe distance helps the hospital if someone does get bitten.

If someone is bitten

Keep the person calm and as still as possible, and lay them down. Call for help and get them to the nearest hospital as quickly and safely as possible. Phone ahead to say you are coming. Do not cut or suck the bite. Do not use a tourniquet, ice, hot water or home remedies, and do not give alcohol. If a spitting snake gets venom in someone's eyes, rinse their eyes under gently running water for at least 15 to 20 minutes, then get them to a doctor.

Bees

If you find a hive or a swarm, leave it alone, keep people and machines away, and tell the supervisor so a bee removal specialist can be called. If bees attack, do not swat at them, because that brings more bees. Run, get into a closed building or vehicle and shut the doors and windows. Do not jump into a pool or a dam: the bees wait at the surface. Scrape a sting out with a fingernail or a card. Do not squeeze it.

Scorpions and allergic reactions

Scorpion stings rarely kill in South Africa, but they can be extremely painful, so get medical help. For advice on any bite or sting, the Poisons Information Helpline is 0861 555 777. Anyone who has trouble breathing or swallowing, starts wheezing or feels faint after a bite or sting needs medical help straight away: call an ambulance on 10177, or 112 from a cell phone. Tell the supervisor at the start if you know you are allergic.

CHECK ON SITE TODAY

- [ ] Look at stacks of bricks, timber, sheeting and pipes, and where long grass or rubble lies near work areas.
- [ ] Check that gloves are available for moving stacked material.
- [ ] Look for bee activity around walls, roofs, meter boxes and old drums.
- [ ] Make sure the nearest hospital and the Poisons Information Helpline number are on the notice board.
- [ ] Ask whether anyone on the crew has a known allergy to stings.
- [ ] Check that boots and clothes are not left lying on the ground overnight.

ASK THE CREW

? Where on this site would a snake or scorpion most likely be hiding?

? What would you do if a snake came out of the stack you were lifting?

? What should you never do if someone is bitten by a snake?

? Does anyone here know they react badly to bee stings?

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR THIS JOB

Leather work gloves when moving stacked material or rubble · Safety boots and long trousers · Safety glasses

THE LAW

Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993, section 8: General duties of employers to their employees; General Safety Regulations, 1986, regulation 3: First aid, emergency equipment and procedures. What each one says, in plain words, with links: sitediary.co.za/toolbox-talks/snakes-bees-scorpions/

Toolbox talk attendance register

TOPIC

Snakes, bees and scorpions

DATE

SITE OR JOB

TIME

PRESENTER

COMPANY

PRESENTER SIGNATURE

By signing, I confirm that I attended this toolbox talk, that it was given in a language I understand, and that I could ask questions.

NO.	NAME AND SURNAME	COMPANY OR TRADE	SIGNATURE
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Keep this register in the site health and safety file. Log the talk in today's site diary with a photo of this page.