

AUGUST

Division of Environmental Services

Safety message

...from the Division Chief

Working outdoors means coming into contact with a variety of stinging insects. Stings from bees, wasps, hornets, and yellow jackets can range from a minor nuisance causing slight redness at the sting site to major systemic reactions such as anaphylaxis.

There are three types of insect sting reactions – *normal*, *localized*, and *allergic*. A **normal** reaction will result in pain, swelling, and redness around the sting site. A large **local** reaction will result in swelling that extends beyond the sting site. An example is a sting on the ankle that causes the entire leg to swell. It appears alarming, but is generally no more severe than a normal reaction. An **allergic** reaction is the most serious and requires immediate attention. Symptoms include: hives, difficulty breathing, swelling of the throat, and rapid pulse.

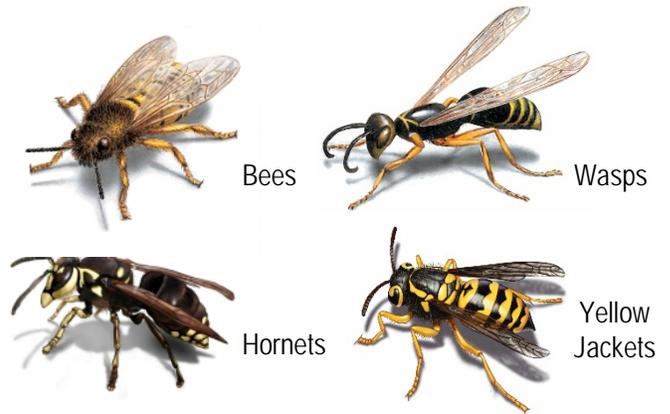
Severity of sting reactions can vary from person to person. It is important to prevent stings, but equally important to have a plan in place if you or your co-worker experiences a sting, especially when working in remote locations. If a sting occurs, monitor the reaction and adjust your work plans accordingly.

Work and play gets us outside and in close contact with the natural environment this month, so just remember...

BEE AWARE!

Sincerely,

Dean Messer, Chief
Division of Environmental Services



Don't get stung.

Cover up. If peak times can't be avoided (morning or early evening), wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants. Tuck pants into boots to prevent access to your skin.

Don't come near me. Use repellents with compounds such as DEET or seek out natural alternatives.

Watch out. Inspect the area where you intend to sit, paying particular attention to stumps, logs, and rock outcroppings.

Alert others. Let your supervisor and co-workers know in advance if you are allergic to stings to ensure proper response in the event you are stung.

But if you do...

Take it out. Carefully remove stinger from skin using tweezers.

Clean up. Wash with soap and water, apply antiseptic, and cover sting site with a bandage.

Keep watching. Monitor reaction and seek medical attention if you suspect you are experiencing severe allergic reaction symptoms.

Think Safety visit <http://dessafety.water.ca.gov>; <http://swpsafety.water.ca.gov> for more information.

Send Safety suggestions to: dessafety@water.ca.gov.