



## Outdoor workers need to be aware of stinging insects, biting snakes

*SCF Arizona your Work Comp Specialist*

Provided by **Tod Dennis**  
Association Coordinator

In the Sonoran Desert, spring brings with it greater insect, bug and snake activity. Outdoor workers should pay special attention to their surroundings to avoid the stings and bites that can set them back with minor and sometimes major medical issues.

When working outside, employees should avoid wasps, bees, ants, spiders, scorpions, mosquitoes, snakes and other stinging or biting insects or animals. In fact, nearly 900 workers' compensation claims were filed with SCF in 2010 because of an insect or animal sting or bite.

"Workers should be aware of their daily surroundings," says SCF Arizona Loss Control Consultant Sandra Bencic. "They need to pay attention to where they place their hands and feet and shake out gloves and shoes before putting them on. And if they are bit or stung, they should get prompt medical treatment."

Below are some of risks associated with getting bit or stung by common Arizona insects and animals:

- **Mosquitoes:** These blood-gorging insects can carry the West Nile virus, with symptoms ranging from a mild flu-like condition to life-threatening illness. When working outside, workers should wear long-sleeved shirts and pants and use an insect repellent on exposed skin. Be aware that mosquitoes are most active during dusk, dawn and at night. They often are found around stagnant water.
- **Scorpions:** Stings from scorpions are not lethal but can be painful and leave nasty marks. Scorpions hide during the day and are most active at night. Be cautious where you place your hands and exposed body parts so you don't inadvertently stumble onto a scorpion's hiding place. Shake out gloves, clothes and shoes before putting on. Scorpions often hide in the latter.
- **Wasps and bees:** Neither of these insects is likely to swarm, unless they feel you are a threat to their nest or hive. That's why it's important to inspect an area for a nest or hive, which may need to be removed before work can proceed, particularly in high-traffic areas. This may require using a pest control professional.
- **Spiders:** Spiders generally are passive, unless they feel they are being attacked. Their bites, however, can lead to burning, swelling and redness, along with headaches, dizziness, muscle rigidity and other symptoms. Brown recluse spider bites are considered more dangerous than that of a black widow, especially for children. In either case, prompt medical treatment can help minimize some symptoms.
- **Ants:** Harvester ants may have the most painful sting among the insects listed. Be aware of any ant piles and nests in areas where you are working. If you are standing on one, there's a good chance you'll get bitten.
- **Rattlesnakes:** Because Arizona is home to various rattlesnake species, workers should be aware of the potential to encounter a venomous snake.

*If you would like more  
information on workplace  
safety please contact your  
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During hot days, snakes tend to hide in moist, damp, shady areas. Never put a hand or foot into an area – such as a hole, meter box, under rocks or bushes – if you can't see what's there. And never attempt to remove a snake yourself; leave it to a trained professional.

“Niche, moisture and food are the three things that most attract snakes and many insects,” says Carl “The Bugman” Olson, assistant curator at the Insect Research Collection at the University of Arizona. “If you don't want them around, you have to see what you can change to make it inhospitable for them.”

Safety and information brochures on “West Nile virus” and “Bites and stings” can be requested at [www.scfaz.com](http://www.scfaz.com). To order, click on “Order Safety Brochures.” Preventing Animal and Insect Bites also will be featured as a class at SCF's Tucson Safety Works Expo, April 2, at the Sheraton Tucson Hotel & Suites. Visit [www.scfaz.com](http://www.scfaz.com) to register for this daylong series of workplace safety seminars.

**If you would like more information, contact your association coordinator.**

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