

# Tool Box Talk

## BUG PROTECTION

July 2012

**P**rotecting employees with outdoor responsibilities from insects should be just as important as protecting them from indoor workplace hazards. Employees should receive appropriate training before they perform outdoor work, and employers should not assume that all employees know what common insects and bugs look like. Training should include any necessary equipment training, plant and insect recognition, appropriate first aid and a working alone policy to be reviewed if applicable.

### Best Practices & Safety Tips

Use insect repellent. Spraying clothing instead of the body helps the repellent last longer, especially when perspiring, and may prevent an allergic reaction to the repellent.

Mosquitoes are attracted to people by skin odours and carbon dioxide from breath. Insect repellents do not kill mosquitoes, but repel or keep away insects. Repellents are effective only at short distances from the treated surface, so you may still see mosquitoes nearby. The effectiveness and duration of protection of different products varies and is affected by factors such as temperature, perspiration and water exposure. Always read the label carefully. Reapply the repellent if you start to get mosquito bites.

Products containing *permethrin* can be used on clothing, shoes, bed nets and camping gear, and are registered by the EPA for this use. Permethrin on clothing both kills insects and acts as a repellent. Permethrin products should NOT be used directly on the skin. Read the label and follow instructions when applying. Treated clothing provides protection for up to 2 weeks and can be machine washed several times before losing effectiveness. Pre-treated clothing is also commercially available at outdoor and sporting goods stores. In addition to repelling mosquitoes, permethrin-treated clothing also repels and kills ticks.

When sunscreen is to be used in conjunction with insect repellents or other barrier creams, apply the sunscreen first, wait at least 30 minutes, then apply the repellent or secondary cream. It may be necessary to reapply creams throughout the day. CDC recommends against use of single combination products containing DEET and sunscreen because the instructions for insect repellent and sunscreen use are different (sunscreen usually needs to be applied more often than insect repellent). Instead, use separate insect repellent and sunscreen products. DEET and Picaridin KBR 3023 are more conventional repellents. Oil of Lemon and Eucalyptus PMD-4, IR3535 - are derived from natural materials. Another option becoming more popular, but also more expensive, is propane mosquito traps for use when working at a single site.

Wear long sleeves and long pants, even if it is 40 °C outside. Wear light coloured clothing (i.e. tan, khaki) to help spot ticks and to be less attractive to insects such as bees. Be mindful of where your hands and feet are when working in wooded areas or areas prone to harbour snakes and spiders. Use a stick or other long-handled item to turn rocks over before picking them up to make sure there is no threat. Do not leave sugary drinks unattended for long periods of time and dispose of garbage after eating food.

### When Bites, Stings or Exposures Occur

- Report the incident.
- Do not scratch the affected area.
- If stung by a wasp or hornet, use a fingernail or object like a credit card to scrape the stinger out.
- Watch for allergic reactions, such as hives, nausea, fever, or difficulty breathing.
- Seek medical attention, depending on the severity.
- Keep the insect, bug, or animal if possible, in case the medical professional needs it to determine treatment. Take a picture or be able to provide a description of the animal or insect if the actual body is not available.

Wasp



Mosquito



Bee



Horse Fly



Tick



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