

OVERVIEW OF FACT SHEET

In North America, there are very few types of insects that carry venom or poison, and none whose venom is dangerous. However, it is possible for an insect bite or sting to cause an allergic reaction that can range from a mild local reaction to something like a severe asthma attack. **In extreme allergic reactions, your airways can close up and you can even stop breathing.**



The insect responsible for the largest number of severe allergic reactions is the yellow jacket wasp.



Recommendations for Protecting Yourself

Employees can protect themselves from stinging insects by:

- knowing their risk of exposure
- Insect identification
- Knowing how to prevent exposure
- Knowing what to do if stung

If you have any questions, please contact the [Environmental Health and Safety Office](#) at 704-687-1111.

Bees, Wasps, and Hornets

Bees, wasps, and hornets are most abundant in the warmer months. Nests and hives may be found in trees, under roof eaves, or on equipment such as ladders.

Preventing Insect Stings

Workers should take the following steps to prevent insect stings:

- Wear light-colored, smooth-finished clothing.
- Avoid perfumed soaps, shampoos, and deodorants.
- Don't wear cologne or perfume.
- Avoid bananas and banana-scented toiletries.
- Wear clean clothing and bathe daily. (Sweat may anger bees.)
- Wear clothing to cover as much of the body as possible.
- Avoid flowering plants when possible.
- Keep work areas clean. Social wasps thrive in places where humans discard food.
- Remain calm and still if a single stinging insect is flying around. (Swatting at an insect may cause it to sting.)
- If you are attacked by several stinging insects at once, run to get away from them. (Bees release a chemical when they sting, which may attract other bees.)
- Go indoors.
- A shaded area is better than an open area to get away from the insects.
- If you are able to physically move out of the area, do not attempt to jump into water. Some insects (particularly Africanized Honey Bees) are known to hover above the water, continuing to sting once you surface for air.
- If a bee comes inside your vehicle, stop the car slowly, and open all the windows.
- Workers with a history of severe allergic reactions to insect bites or stings should consider carrying an epinephrine auto injector (EpiPen) and should wear a medical identification bracelet or necklace stating their allergy.

First Aid

If a worker is stung by a bee, wasp, or hornet:

- Have someone stay with the worker to be sure that they do not have an allergic reaction. Call 911 if the employee has 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.

Remember! Insect stings can elicit a life-threatening, allergic reaction in some individuals. Check with your physician to determine what symptoms require a visit to the emergency room or calling 911. Never attempt any control measure if you have a known allergy to insect stings.

For more information see:

<http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/epublic/pages/publicationD.jsp?publicationId=355>

<http://www.nasdonline.org/document/962/d000800/first-aid-for-bee-and-insect-stings.html>

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/insect/05525.html>

http://chealth.canoe.ca/channel_condition_info_details.asp?disease_id=167&channel_id=1027&relation_id=69201