

## **Bites or Stings from Insects, Snakes, Rodents and Other Animals**

**Railroad right of ways, switches, derails, equipment and rolling stock can create ideal habitats for snakes, insects, rodents and other animals. Railroad workers must always stay alert and use caution to avoid encounters with animals that may present a danger.**

### **Stinging and Biting Insects**

Insects such as bees, wasps, flies, mosquitoes and spiders can present a danger to humans. Mosquitoes and ticks can transmit serious and even deadly diseases including West Nile virus and Lyme disease.

Below are a few steps that can be taken to reduce risks associated with insect bites:

- Use insect repellents containing DEET or Picaridin
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, socks, and long pants to cover and protect skin
- Wear gloves and avoid reaching into areas that you cannot see
- Treat switch stands and equipment with wasp/bug sprays when and where needed
- Keep right of ways, roadways and walkways clear of vegetation
- Carry lighting to illuminate areas where work is required before reaching in or entering the area
- If bitten by potentially venomous spider and you feel it is safe to do so, identify the spider that bit you and seek immediate medical attention.

### **Snakes**

Venomous snakes are often found in areas that offer shelter, food sources and access to water. This can include areas with ground cover and debris, like piles of construction materials, places with rodent infestations and temperature-related locations for warming up in the sun or resting and cooling off.

If working in areas where snakes are known or suspected to exist:

- Wear sturdy leather gloves and high-top boots.
- Do not place hands or feet into areas that are not clearly uninhabited.
- Stay clear of snakes.
- If bitten, seek immediate medical attention, and try to note the color and shape of the snake's head
- Research the work environment to see what types of snakes, especially those that may be venomous, are in the area.

### **Rodents and Animals**

Rodents and other animals can spread diseases such as rat bite fever, leptospirosis and rabies. Rabies is commonly spread to humans through bites from infected animals. However, animals do not need to be alive or even present to spread harmful diseases to humans. Contact with rodent droppings, urine or saliva or breathing in air contaminated by rodent waste is enough to spread illness.

- Workers should make every effort to avoid animals in the wild, especially those that appear ill or disoriented. If animals are seen that showcase any abnormal symptoms, local wildlife enforcement should be notified.
- If a rodent infestation is found in the workplace, take [proper steps](#) to clean the area and [prevent rodents from returning](#).