

West Nile Virus

People who work outdoors during mosquito season have an increased risk of contracting the West Nile Virus. The virus is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. These mosquitoes contract the virus from biting an infected bird. Most mosquito bites cause itching and minor irritation, but it is impossible to tell from a bite on the skin surface whether the mosquito was car-

rying the West Nile Virus. There is a blood test available to determine if you have contracted the virus.

Upon feeling symptoms of the West Nile Virus, seek medical attention to determine the cause. The virus is also known to cause severe illnesses such as meningitis and encephalitis.

Mosquitoes can bite day or night; it is important to protect yourself:

- Mosquitoes are attracted to darker, more intense colours, so wear light coloured clothing, including long sleeved shirts or jackets, and long pants; and
- Use insect repellent provided by Canada Post.

Report standing water in flowerpots, wading pools, old tires, etc., on customer and employer property to your local union representative.



If you have been bitten by a mosquito at work and suspect that you may have contracted the West Nile Virus, seek medical attention immediately. Be sure to inform the doctor that it occurred at work in order to have a Workers Compensation claim started for your injury.

Symptoms of the West Nile Virus

A person may experience one or many symptoms

- Fever
- Confusion
- Muscle weakness
- Stiff neck
- Fatigue
- Severe headache
- Sudden sensitivity to light
- Extreme swelling or infection at the site of the mosquito bite

Use Caution with Insect Repellent

Although the use of insect repellent is advised when dealing with pests, it is important to exercise caution:

- Follow directions on the container;
- Apply the repellent in a designated area to avoid possible reactions from others around you;
- Apply the repellent sparingly and only on exposed skin or on top of clothing;

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Slow Down

Now that we are experiencing increasing temperatures and humidity, it is important to be wise and exercise caution while working in the heat.

Alternating work with longer rest periods in a cool, shaded area can help workers avoid heat strain.

Take your breaks!

Be aware and learn to detect early signs of heat strain (dehydration, heat cramps, exhaustion).

Slow down

Be sure to replace lost fluids by increasing your liquid intake.

The American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) suggests less work in high temperatures, as indicated in the Permissible Heat Exposure table below.

Humidex	Mesures
25-29 C	Supply water to workers on an "as needed" basis.
30-33 C	Post Heat Stress Alert notice; encourage workers to drink extra water; start recording hourly temperature and relative humidity.
34-37 C	Post Heat Stress Warning notice; notify workers that they need to drink extra water; ensure workers are trained to recognize symptoms.
38-39 C	Provide 15 minutes relief per hour; provide adequate cool (10-15 C) water; at least 1 cup (240 mL) of water every 20 minutes; workers with symptoms should seek medical attention.
40-42 C	Provide 30 minutes relief per hour in addition to the provisions listed previously.
43-44 C	If feasible provide 45 minutes relief per hour in addition to the provisions listed above. If a 75% relief period is not feasible then stop work until the Humidex is 42 C or less.
45 C or over	Stop work until the Humidex is 44 C or less

The humidex plan is a simplified way of protecting workers from heat stress. It is based on the ACGIH Heat Exposure Threshold Limit Values below

If you feel yourself being overcome by heat, play it safe. Exercise your right to refuse. Make your health a priority!

Permissible Heat Exposure - Threshold Limit Values			
Work/Rest Regimen	Light Work	Moderate Work	Heavy Work
Continuous Work	30 C/86 F	26.7 C/80 F	25 C/77 F
75% Work-25% Rest/ hr.	30.6 C/87 F	28 C/82 F	25.9 C/78 F
50% Work-50% Rest/hr.	31.4 C/89 F	29.4 C/85 F	27.9 C/82 F
25% Work-75% Rest/hr.	32.2 C/90 F	31.1 C/88 F	30 C/86 F
Heavy Work is defined as shoveling, sledgehammer work, pushing or pulling heavy loads, etc.			
Moderate Work is considered to be walking around with moderate lifting and pushing, etc.			
Light Work is regarded as sitting or standing to control machines, performing hand or arm work, etc.			

Reminder: Use Caution when Giving Medical Information to Canada Post

Canada Post has agreed to provide members who have been injured at work with a letter indicating Canada Post's intention of challenging any Workers Compensation Claim.

Speak to a union representative before you supply Canada Post with any type of medical information.

Attention Health and Safety Activists

If you would like to have your name placed on the national mailing list for CUPW health and safety material, please contact:

Gayle Bossenberry

CUPW National Office

377 Bank Street

Ottawa, ON K2P 1Y3

613.236.7238 ext. 7911

Email: gbossenberry@cupw-sttp.org

Cat and Dog Bites

In all cases of cat and dog bites, especially if the skin is broken, seek medical attention immediately. If you are scratched by the animal, pay close attention to the injury because an infection could develop. If you were bitten or scratched by a cat or dog at work, be sure to tell the doctor so Workers Compensation forms can be completed.

There is a possibility that you will suffer from post-traumatic stress after an attack happens. Should this occur, be sure to seek out medical attention and file a Workers Compensation claim.

Report the incident to your local union representative and your supervisor. An investigation must occur and preventative measures must be put in place in order to prevent another attack. The union strongly recommends filing a claim with the Workers Compensation Board. Ask your union representative to forward the investigation report to the proper authority in your community, such as the animal control office.

Refer to *Our Health Our Safety* Volume 3, Issue 4 - Spring 2006 for more information on injuries involving a third party.



Injuries to the thigh and hand after a CUPW member was bitten by a dog

Lyme Disease

You can acquire Lyme disease when a tick that bites you is infected with bacteria. A tick has eight legs, unlike most insects, which have six legs. Tick bites generally occur from May to September, although this period sometimes changes from year to year in different regions.

The bacteria carried by the tick enters the body at the place where the tick has bitten. The bacteria can then multiply and travel to different parts of the body through the blood. Lyme disease is not transmitted from human to human. However, a person can get the disease more than once from being bitten by ticks.

Lyme disease is difficult to recognize. It may begin with a slowly expanding rash around or near the tick bite. The rash may look like a ring shaped bull's eye and can grow to the size of a dinner plate in some cases. On the other hand, the rash may be mild and appear anywhere on the body. Some people experience no rash at all. Other people experience flu-like

symptoms soon after receiving a tick bite. Complications can sometimes lead to nerve disease, heart disease or arthritis.

Blood tests are available to detect antibodies that the human body produces to defend itself against the bacteria. The tests are helpful to establish if



exposure has occurred. However, the tests do not indicate if someone has an active case of the disease.

There are antibiotics available to treat Lyme disease at all stages. However, the disease can have serious side-effects.

When working outdoors take precautions to protect yourself:

- Find out from your local public health office if there are ticks in your area;

- Check for ticks on and under clothing after working in tick infested areas; sometimes ticks move around on the body before they bite;
- Check your skin daily - sometimes ticks take hours or even days to attach to the skin;
- Wear long sleeve shirts with tight fitting wrists to prevent ticks from getting to your skin; and
- Apply insect repellent supplied by Canada Post to pant legs, socks, shoes and skin.

If a tick has bitten you, carefully remove the whole insect from the skin. Do not squash the tick as this may help the bacteria enter your body. Wash the area with alcohol or soap and water. Seek medical attention immediately. If this occurs at work, be sure to inform the doctor. A Workers Compensation claim will have to be filed. Contact your local union representative for advice on how to deal with your claim.

Bee and Wasp Stings

Insects such as bees, wasps, and hornets will sting in self-defence and to protect their nests. Be observant of the area around you. If you see insects flying to and from a particular place, avoid it. These insects sometimes nest in relay boxes, community mail-boxes, decks, patios, dock areas, doorways and near fences. Bees and wasps can be attracted to perfume, cologne, or scented soap.

Should a bee or wasp fly near you, slowly raise your arms to protect your face and stand still or move slowly away. Never move rapidly; this often provokes an attack. Never strike or swing a wasp or bee against your body since it may be trapped and sting you. If crushed, a yellow jacket could incite nearby yellow jackets into a frenzied attack.

If a bee or wasp gets into your vehicle: remain calm; safely pull off the road; open the window; and allow the bee or wasp to escape.

Only the bee leaves a barbed stinger, with its venom sac attached, in the skin of its victim. Immediate removal of the stinger and sac usually reduces harmful effects. Scrape

the stinger away with a sideways movement. Do not try to pinch out the stinger since this could inject more venom from the sac down into the wound.

Wasps, yellow jackets and hornets have a lance-like stinger without barbs and can sting repeatedly.

The victim should brush the insect off the skin quickly and then immediately leave the area quietly.

If you are stung, the reaction could last for a few hours or days. The sting area is often painful, swollen and itchy.

Some people may have a severe allergic reaction, which can occur minutes after the sting. The reactions could be light headedness, nausea, stomach cramps, diarrhoea, itching around the eyes, coughing, hives breaking out, vomiting, swelling, wheezing, difficulty breathing or swallowing, lowering of blood pressure, shock or unconsciousness. This is a medical emergency and treatment must be received immediately.

Sometimes a person may be stung many times before being able to get away from the nesting site. Humans can be killed if stung numerous times in a single incident.

If you are stung on the hand and your face begins to swell or hives break out all over your body, this is a serious condition requiring emergency room attention.

If you have nesting wasps or bees in your work area, be sure to bring the issue to your union representative. The employer has the responsibility to ensure your work area is safe. It is the employer's responsibility to have the nests removed.



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Insect Repellent

- ♦ Heavy application and saturation is unnecessary and does not guarantee increased effectiveness;
- ♦ Avoid any eye contact with repellents;
- ♦ Do not use repellents on open wounds, irritated or sunburned skin;
- ♦ Always wash treated skin with soap and water when protection is no longer required. If you are concerned about being sensitive to the product, apply the repellent to a small area of skin and wait 24 hours to see if there is any reaction;
- ♦ Sunscreen and insect repellent can both be used; apply sunscreen first and then apply the insect repellent. Do not massage the repellent onto your skin.

Canada Post has agreed to ensure that adequate supplies of insect repellent will be made available to members working outdoors, including dock areas, at each work location during the mosquito season.

CUPW • Our Health Our Safety

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