



TAILGATE SAFETY

RATTLESNAKES

In the Bay Area, the most common, and only native venomous species, is the Northern Pacific Rattlesnake. Identifying features aside from the characteristic rattle on the tail (which is sometimes lost); Rattlesnakes have a powerful body, thin neck and a well defined triangular or arrow shaped head. The Northern Pacific Rattlesnake is dark gray, olive, and yellowish brown, brown or black, and has dark hexagonal or circular blotches with light borders.

All rattlesnake bites require medical attention in an emergency room. If venom is injected, symptoms can include: swelling, pain, bleeding at the site, nausea, vomiting, sweating, chills, dizziness, weakness, numbness or tingling of the mouth or tongue, and changes in the heart rate and blood pressure. Other symptoms can include excessive salivation, thirst, swollen eyelids, blurred vision, muscle spasms, and unconsciousness. Rattlesnake venom also interferes with the ability of the blood to clot properly. If you are less than 30 minutes from the nearest emergency room, initial treatment is simple:

DO

- Try to calm the victim
- Gently wash the area with soap and water and keep area lower than the heart
- Remove any rings, watches or tight clothing
- Apply a cold, wet cloth over the bite
- Transport victim to the nearest emergency facility

DO NOT (These treatments will NOT help the victim and are dangerous!)

- Apply a tourniquet
- Pack the bite area in ice
- Let the victim drink alcohol
- Cut the wound with a knife or razor
- Try to suck out venom
- Apply electric shock

Severe symptoms can be life threatening and must be treated with antivenin, a prescription medication. Antivenin is given intravenously with fluids. Although complications may develop, the majority of rattlesnake bites are successfully treated with as little as two to three days of hospitalization.

Avoiding Snake Bites: Hands, feet, and ankles are the most common sites for rattlesnake bites. Using some common sense rules can prevent most snake bites.

- Always look for concealed snakes before picking up rocks, sticks, or wood. Always check carefully around stumps or logs before sitting. When climbing, always look before putting your hands in a new location. Snakes can climb walls, trees, and rocks and are frequently found at high altitudes.
- Baby rattlesnakes are poisonous! They can and do bite. Leave them alone.
- Never tease a snake to see how far it can strike. You can be several feet from the snake and still be within striking distance.
- Always give snakes the right of way!
- Wear long pants and boots when in a known rattlesnake area.

Training Tips: a) Show employees pictures of rattlesnakes so they are aware of what they look like b) Allow employees to discuss experiences with rattlesnakes c) Be specific per jobsite about where snakes could be “hiding”.



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