

# SAFE OPERATING PROCEDURES

## Dealing with Snakes, Wasps & Bees

**This Safe Operating Procedure (SOP) is to be regarded as the minimum required.**

**Each task will present differently and additional precautions may be required. Staff are to carry-out their own Hazard Assessment and take any other steps required to complete the task in a safe manner.**

**Where any doubt arises, work is not to commence until a Supervisor has been consulted.**

# Dealing with Snakes, Wasps & Bees

## 1. **Who this SOP applies to:**

All staff/students in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

## 2. **General Principle(s):**

In accordance with The Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act, 1986, Flinders University aims to provide a safe working environment.

This SOP aims to reduce employees' exposure to bites and stings from common but hazardous fauna by implementing appropriate reaction and control strategies.

This SOP relates only to general precautions when encountering snakes, wasps and bees, it does not cover first-aid or other medical issues. Due to the toxicity of snake venoms and the allergic susceptibility of some individuals to wasp, bee and other insect stings, immediate professional medical attention should be sought where such bites and stings occur.

This SOP does not relate to bites and stings inflicted by other local fauna. In the event of such injury staff are reminded to seek the assistance of a trained first aider for treatment as necessary.

## 3. **Procedures**

### **3.1 Snakes**

Snakes are a natural part of the university environment and may be encountered at any time, especially in the warmer months. Snakes are protected species and are not to be harried or harmed in any way.

When sighted in the built-up areas of the campus, observe the following:

- **Do not approach or attempt to corner, capture or kill the snake**
- Snakes have poor hearing but heightened reaction to vibration which, for them, indicates movement of potential prey - tread gently in their vicinity. The overwhelming majority of bites occur when the snake is threatened; left alone they are unlikely to attack.
- Alert those working in, or passing through, the area of the snake's presence and warn them not to approach it.

- As soon as possible, call the Maintenance Office (12177/12178) and Security (12880) to arrange a snake-catcher, advising details of the colour/markings, approximate length and general location. After hours, call Security (12880).
- If possible, stay at an appropriate distance from the snake and observe its movements, this will be invaluable information to the snake-catcher on arrival.

### **3.2 European Wasps**

There are many types of wasps, including harmless local species such as ‘mud’ and ‘paper’ wasps. European Wasps however are particularly hazardous due to the toxicity of the venom, the ability to sting repeatedly, the numbers in their nests and the ferocity of attacks when nests are threatened.

European Wasps are identifiable by their larger size and distinctive yellow/black markings. They are active only in the warmer spring-summer months and are particularly attracted to rotting fruit, other food and scraps and liquid sources.

General precautions to lessen the impact of wasps in the local work area include:

- Do not leave food-scraps, or food wrappers in the open, dispose of all such items in lidded containers.
- Remove or cover open water sources such as puddles and ponds, repair outside leaking taps.
- Do not leave open drink cans uncovered, preferably drink from transparent containers and/or use straws. It is common for wasps to enter cans unnoticed - stings in the mouth and throat are particularly dangerous.
- Don’t swat or annoy wasps that are hovering around food – wasps are attracted to a moving target. Although difficult, the best way to avoid being stung is to sit still and ignore the wasp!
- Wasps generally sting only to defend their nest and won’t sting away from the nest unless provoked. However, some people seem to elicit attacks from wasps without provocation, this may be due to the use of cosmetics or chemicals in perspiration.
- Be particularly careful if you discover a nest entrance. When a nest is disturbed, wasps will fly out with a wing-beat frequency that stimulates other wasps to fly out and defend the nest. They will attack the intruder within about 7 meters of the nest, paying special attention to moving targets. The attack may last up to 5 minutes, longer during hot weather.
- If you do discover a nest entrance, report the location to the Maintenance Office, to arrange eradication by pest-control specialists.

### **3.3 Honey Bees**

Bees are a valuable part of any eco-system. Generally they are docile and, like European Wasps, will not attack unless provoked. The general precautions for wasps are equally applicable to bees.

#### **Swarming**

The tendency to swarm is usually greatest when bees increase their population rapidly in spring to early summer. Bees exhibit defensive behavior only in the vicinity of their nest. Swarms have neither young nor food stores and will not exhibit defensive or aggressive behavior unless unduly provoked.

When bees swarm they will settle on a tree limb, bush, or other convenient site, sometimes for several hours. The cohesiveness of the swarm is due to their attraction to a pheromone produced by the queen. The swarm will send out scout bees to seek a cavity to nest in and will move on when a suitable nesting site is found.

Take the following actions when swarms are reported:

- **Call Maintenance (#12177/#12178).**
- **Alert people in vicinity.**
- **Contact Maintenance (#12177/#12178) if the swarm is present the next day.**
- **Do not attempt to disturb the swarm in any way, including trying to hose the bees away.**

#### **Colonies (hives)**

Bees set up colonies in cavities such as hollow tree limbs, occasionally they may gain access to wall cavities through gaps in joints and blockwork. Unless the hive entrance in a tree is likely to be a threat to, or disturbed by, passing pedestrian traffic, they should generally be left in place.

Call Maintenance staff (#12177/#12178) when a hive is discovered in a building cavity. Pest-control specialists will be called to remove the colony (if possible) or eradicate (if necessary). Once the colony has been removed, an authorised person will ensure the entry is filled with expanding foam to prevent further hive formation.

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