It is estimated that as many as two million people in the United States are very allergic to stinging insect venom. Every year about 100 people die from sting reactions. More related deaths may be occurring because these reactions can be mistakenly diagnosed as heart attacks, sunstrokes, or they may be attributed to other causes. More people die yearly from the effects of insect venom than from spider bites. Stinging insects can present an occupational health problem, mainly for sensitive workers performing duties outdoors or in greenhouses.

Usually, danger occurs when workers disturb the nests of stinging insects such as bees, wasps, hornets, or yellow jackets.

****

AN IMPORTANT YELLOW JACKET FACT:

All wasps will defend their nests, but the Yellow Jacket, pictured at the left, as well as hornets, are the most aggressive. They can be distinguished from bees by their thin "waists." Bees are thick-waisted.

Yellow jackets forage on food and beverages that people eat, especially sweets and meats.

**Mild Reactions**

Most people have a mild reaction to bee, wasp, hornet, or yellow jacket stings. Common signs and symptoms include:

* Itching
* Irritation of the eyes or mucous members
* Redness of skin
* Swelling of the skin’s surface

With a mild reaction, an individual that has been stung can often relieve the symptoms with ice, baking soda, 1%-2.5% ammonia solution, or topical steroids.

**Fatal Reactions**

The most severe allergic reactions to stings can be fatal. These reactions, called anaphylaxis, can often begin with these kinds of symptoms:

* Breathing difficulties
* Swelling around the lips or in the throat
* Faintness
* Confusion
* Rapid heartbeat
* Hives

**For any severe allergic reaction, seek emergency medical help immediately!**

Reaction may occur in a few minutes; death can often occur rapidly, as quickly as 30 minutes.

**Preventing Stings**

Take these simple steps to prevent stings.

Let a professional exterminator remove nests and assure all others are well outside affected areas.

* Do not stand near a nest.
* Never try to burn or flood a nest with water since this will only make the insects angry.
* Be careful not to mow over a nest in or on the ground or disturb a nest overhead.
* Don’t strike or swing at a wasp or bee.
* Don’t trap a wasp or bee against your body. That can cause the insect to sting.
* Wear a hat and closed shoes (not sandals) when working outside.
* Wearing light-colored cotton clothing is best. Avoid white or bright-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
* Avoid using heavy, flowery perfumes, colognes, or scents. It can attract bees or flying pests.
* When it’s safe to do so, run away from bees, wasps, hornets, or yellow jackets if they are attacking. They are not very fast, and most people can usually outrun them.
* Avoid having containers of sweet beverages in areas where bees or wasps are present; these can attract them.
* Avoid drinking from a can. Stinging insects might be inside the can where you cannot see them.

This form documents that the training specified above was presented to the listed participants. By signing below, each participant acknowledges receiving this training.

Organization: Date:

Trainer: Trainer’s Signature:

**Class Participants:**

Name: Signature:

Name: Signature:

Name: Signature:

Name: Signature:

Name: Signature:

Name: Signature:

Name: Signature:

Name: Signature:

Name: Signature:

Name: Signature:

Name: Signature:

Name: Signature:

Name: Signature:

Name: Signature:

Name: Signature:

Name: Signature: