

Facilities Management
Snake Bite Prevention and Response Standard Operating Procedures

SOP #:	EHS-028	Revision: 0
Dept:	Environmental Health and Safety	Date: 08/13/19
Approval:		Date: 08/13/19

1. PURPOSE

About 7,000 people are bitten by venomous snakes in the United States each year with only five or six fatalities annually. Venomous snake bites are medical emergencies. While this is rare, venomous animals still pose a risk to our campus community. There are only three venomous snakes in the state of Colorado. All three are rattlesnakes and the only rattlesnake native to Pueblo, Colorado is the Prairie Rattlesnake.

The purpose of these standard operating procedures is to provide guidance on prevention and treatment of snake bites, including first aid steps. CSU-Pueblo is actively concerned with the safety of all faculty, staff, students and guests on the CSU-Pueblo campus. Safety can only be effectively achieved with the cooperation of the entire campus community.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

2.A. Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) will be responsible for:

2.A.1. Developing and updating of the Snake Bite Prevention and Response Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).

3. DEFINITIONS

3.A. Venomous Snake – A member of the suborder Serpentes that is capable of producing venom, which it uses for killing prey, defense, and to assist with digestion of its prey.

4. PROCEDURES

4.A. Prevention

4.A.1. Most snakes will avoid people if possible, but all snakes will bite as a last resort when threatened.

4.A.2. Avoid areas where snakes may be hiding, such as under rocks and logs.

4.A.3. Even though most snakes are not venomous, avoid picking up or playing with any snake.

4.A.4. Do not provoke any snake.

4.A.5. When hiking, wear long pants and boots if possible.

4.B. Call 911 if someone has been bitten by any snake. If possible, call ahead to the emergency room so that antivenin can be ready.

4.C. Symptoms of rattlesnake bites

4.C.1. Symptoms usually begin right away and may include:

- 4.C.1.a. Bleeding
- 4.C.1.b. Breathing difficulty
- 4.C.1.c. Blurred vision
- 4.C.1.d. Eyelid drooping
- 4.C.1.e. Low blood pressure
- 4.C.1.f. Nausea and vomiting
- 4.C.1.g. Numbness
- 4.C.1.h. Pain at site of bite
- 4.C.1.i. Partial Paralysis
- 4.C.1.j. Rapid pulse
- 4.C.1.k. Skin color changes
- 4.C.1.l. Swelling
- 4.C.1.m. Tingling
- 4.C.1.n. Tissue damage
- 4.C.1.o. Thirst
- 4.C.1.p. Tiredness

- 4.C.1.q. Weakness
- 4.C.1.r. Weak pulse

4.D. First Aid

4.D.1. Call 911 and get medical help right away.

4.D.2. Keep the person calm. Reassure them that bites can be effectively treated in an emergency room. Restrict movement, and keep the affected area below heart level to reduce the flow of venom.

4.D.3. Remove any rings or constricting items since the affected area may swell. Create a loose splint if possible to help restrict movement of the area.

4.D.4. Monitor the person's vital signs (temperature, pulse, breathing rate, and blood pressure) if possible. If there are signs of shock, lay the person flat and elevate the feet about a foot.

4.D.5. Do not waste time hunting for the snake, and do not trap it or pick it up. If the snake is dead, be careful of the head -- a snake can actually bite (from a reflex) for several hours after it's dead. All venomous snakes in Colorado are rattlesnakes and the emergency room will be able to determine whether it was a rattlesnake bite or not by looking at the bite.

4.E. Other precautions

4.E.1. DO NOT pick up the snake or try to trap it.

4.E.2. DO NOT wait for symptoms to appear if bitten. Seek immediate medical attention.

4.E.3. DO NOT allow the person to become over-exerted. If necessary, carry the person to safety.

4.E.4. DO NOT apply a tourniquet.

4.E.5. DO NOT apply cold compresses or ice to a snake bite.

4.E.6. DO NOT soak the wound in water.

4.E.7. DO NOT cut into a snake bite with a knife or razor.

4.E.8. DO NOT try to suck out the venom by mouth.

- 4.E.9. DO NOT give the person [stimulants](#) or [pain medicines](#) unless a doctor tells you to do so.
- 4.E.10. DO NOT give the person anything by mouth.
- 4.E.11. DO NOT raise the site of the bite above the level of the person's heart.