

BEE STINGS AND INSECTS BITES

DON'T LET INSECTS MAKE YOU SORE

Working on highway or building projects in the great outdoors can be one of the great benefits of being a Laborer. Unfortunately, the heightened risk of stings and bites from insects or bees is also one of the drawbacks.

Stings or bites can be caused by bees, wasps, mosquitoes, ticks, fleas, horseflies, ants, and spiders. While most occurrences are typically little more than temporary pain or an annoying itch, some stings or bites can be life threatening for those with allergies – or if West Nile Virus or Lyme Disease is contracted. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the risks and remedies before getting on the work site.



Avoiding stings and bites

- ♦ Be on the watch for bees' nests on the work site.
- ♦ Wear pants, socks and gloves.
- ♦ Avoid strong-scented soaps.
- ♦ Wear insect repellents with DEET – it is effective at repelling deer ticks which transmit Lyme disease.
- ♦ Be careful while eating or drinking sweet foods and liquids outside.
- ♦ If surrounded by a swarm of bees or wasps, move out of the area slowly. Violent or sudden movements can make them attack.

Treating bee stings

If you are allergic to bees, it is highly important to keep your medicine close by. For those without allergies, it is still important to monitor a bee sting and treat it appropriately:

- ♦ A bee leaves behind a stinger. Remove it as quickly as possible by scraping it off with a blunt-edged object, such as a credit card.
- ♦ Wash the area carefully with soap and water.
- ♦ Apply an ice pack or a cold, wet washcloth

for a few minutes.

- ♦ Take acetaminophen or antihistamines for pain and itching, or apply calamine lotion.
- ♦ A sting in the mouth warrants immediate medical attention as swelling could block airways and cause a life-threatening reaction.

Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is contracted through the bite of a deer tick. Deer ticks are about the size of the head of a pin and are most prominent during May and June, but a problem throughout the warm months in New York. The first sign of Lyme disease is an itchy rash that resembles a bulls-eye. Symptoms can occur days or months after the bite – so it is critical to check your body after each workday for ticks. If any are found, remove them right away and contact your doctor immediately.


Treating ticks

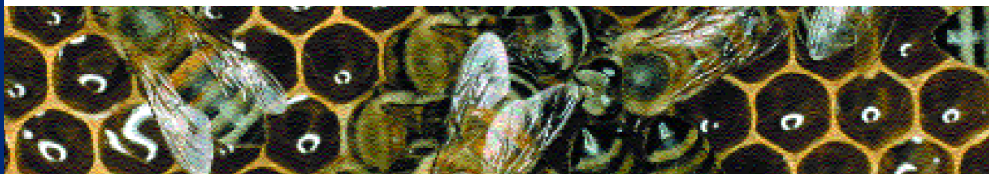
If you find a tick on yourself:

- ♦ Use tweezers to grasp the tick firmly at its head or mouth, next to your skin.
- ♦ Pull firmly and steadily on the tick until it lets go, then swab the bite site with alcohol.
- ♦ Do not use petroleum jelly or a lit match to kill and remove a tick.
- ♦ Call your doctor – you may be asked to save the tick to check for Lyme disease.

West Nile virus

West Nile virus is spread by mosquitoes and in rare cases, can lead to encephalitis, meningitis or death. About 80 percent of people infected with West Nile virus have no symptoms. When symptoms do appear, they include fever, headache and body aches, skin rashes and swollen lymph nodes.

Although there is currently no treatment for the infection, supportive care in a hospital may be needed to help the body fight the illness on its own. If you think you have the West Nile virus, contact your doctor immediately. 



HIGHWAY WORK ZONE SAFETY

Keep your eyes on your work – and the road

Imagine going to a workplace every day where giant hunks of metal constantly fly by you at 70 miles hour, only inches from your face and body. Sound like a soldier ducking bullets and shrapnel on a battlefield? How about speeding cars on a highway construction worksite?

While often taken for granted by most motorists, highway construction is extremely dangerous work. According to the New York State Department of Transportation, a total of 467 traffic accidents were reported in New York state work zones in 2004, seven of which resulted in fatalities.

Sadly, those disturbing figures increased on May 20, when three Laborers working on an I-81 bridge construction project near Binghamton were killed when a tour bus drove through their construction work zone (see Summer 2005 Tri-Fund).

This accident demonstrates what happens all too often in highway work zones when motorists drive too fast and pay little attention. It doesn't come as any surprise to Laborers that fatalities such as these have increased on highway work zones in recent years. Nationally, more than 80 highway-construction workers are killed each year, while 7,500 are injured. And the need for highway maintenance and construction is always on the rise – statewide traffic increased by 21 percent between 1990 and 2000.

While there is nothing Laborers working in highway construction zones can do to prevent drivers from speeding through them, it is important to be prepared to react appropriately in the event of an accident.

To stay as safe as possible in the highway work zones, there are several critical safeguards Laborers should practice.

Steps to take at an accident scene:

- ▲ **Stay calm.** – As traumatic as car accidents can be, your ability to keep your cool and take the right steps might save someone's life.
- ▲ **Act quickly.** – As soon as an accident has occurred, call 911 immediately. The sooner medical help arrives, the greater the odds of survival for those injured.
- ▲ **Secure the site.** – If there is a state trooper or police car already on the site, make sure an officer is aware an accident has occurred so they can control or redirect traffic as necessary and call for back up. If there isn't a policeman on site, call for one immediately and make sure traffic will not enter the accident scene during the interim.
- ▲ **Get the word out.** – Make sure all site foremen and workers in the construction zone are aware an accident has occurred and have stopped work immediately to help prevent another one.
- ▲ **Don't move the injured.** – If a worker or automobile passenger is injured, do not move them. Keep them as stationary as possible and wait for professional help to arrive to avoid further injury.
- ▲ **Stop the bleeding.** – If there has been an injury resulting in excessive bleeding, find a clean cloth – such as a shirt, towel or blanket – and apply pressure to the wound to slow the bleeding until an ambulance arrives.

Watch your back

- ▲ Have spotters warn you of potential hazards when you must work with your back to oncoming traffic or equipment.
- ▲ Make sure cones, barrels or signs have not been moved out of place, inviting traffic into the work site. If they have been moved, notify a supervisor immediately.
- ▲ Stay out of "blind spots" to traffic when possible.
- ▲ Visualize a "danger area" near the flow of highway traffic, and remain outside of it.
- ▲ Anticipate traffic volume and speed, as well as the actual speed limit within the work zone
- ▲ Be aware of plans for safely handling intermittent traffic stoppages; e.g., for equipment turn-around, etc.
- ▲ Communicate with drivers and operators by radio or hand signals – and do not approach them until you communicate.
- ▲ Join in safety discussions – share your knowledge and experience.
- ▲ Consider seasonal landscape and foliage when choosing colors for clothing, so workers do not blend into the background in the eyes of motorists.





Highway Work Zone safety facts to remember:

- ▲ Most accidents happen within the first three days a worker is on a project. Pay attention to jobsite demographics, highway traffic flow, hazards and precautions your first few days on the job.
- ▲ Problems at the job site are not always common knowledge. Report all unsafe working conditions to your foreman or other supervisor.
- ▲ Most fatalities at highway construction sites are related to highway traffic or construction vehicles operating within the work zone.
- ▲ The view of drivers in dump trucks or other construction vehicles is often obstructed – especially when backing up. Be extra careful when working around them.
- ▲ Construction equipment does not need to be moving to pose a hazard. One Laborer was killed when his clothing became entangled in the operating auger of a stationary construction machine. Practice caution even around non-moving machinery and avoid loose-fitting clothing.
- ▲ Communication between work crews is critical for safety. Make sure all workers on a project understand the patterns of construction vehicle traffic.

Nighttime highway construction tips

Working on highway work zones at night presents a whole separate set of challenges. In addition to the other safeguards described on this page, follow these important nighttime tips:

- ▲ **Stay alert** – Nighttime workers should always get plenty of rest just prior to their shift to avoid drowsiness.
- ▲ **Be seen** – Wear high visibility and retro-reflective clothing, headgear, armbands, flaggers' gloves and a flashing light if possible.
- ▲ **Light it up** – Make sure the work zone is well lit, and place retro-reflective tape on all equipment.
- ▲ **Cut the Glare** – When installing lighting within a work zone, make sure to control glare so as not to blind workers and passing motorists. Consider lowering the height of lighting equipment to prevent this from happening.
- ▲ **Check it out** – Inspect high-visibility clothing regularly to ensure that color has not faded and that retro-reflective properties have not been lost.

PUMPING UP

The rise of steroid abuse and its harmful effects

The latest national news story about a professional athlete taking steroids seems to break every month. Perhaps more disturbing, recent studies indicate that it's not just major league baseball players popping pills to gain a competitive edge – steroid usage has become increasingly common among mainstream society; including Laborers.

Up until recently, steroid abuse was thought to be a problem isolated to body-builders, athletes and fitness buffs attempting to improve their physical performance. However, various reports now indicate that individuals in occupations requiring physical strength – such as construction workers, bodyguards and law enforcement officers – may also be participating in this drug abuse.

A recent study found that nearly 1.1 million Americans admitted using steroids, with 2.5 percent of 8th graders, 3.0 percent of 10th graders, and 3.5 percent of 12th graders reportedly taking them. An increasing number of high school seniors do not believe steroids are risky.

This is an alarming trend because of the harmful side effects of steroids, including serious injury and death.

What are steroids?

Anabolic steroids is the familiar name for synthetic substances related to the male sex hormones (androgens). They can be taken orally or injected to promote the growth of skeletal muscle and the development of male sexual characteristics.

First discovered in the 1930s by scientists to increase lean body mass, strength and aggressiveness in

Steroids can cause:

- ✓ Heart Disease
- ✓ Liver cancer
- ✓ Depression
- ✓ Hostility and aggression
- ✓ Eating disorders
- ✓ Stunted height
- ✓ Acne
- ✓ Baldness
- ✓ Risk of HIV



lab animals, more than 100 different anabolic steroids have since been developed, but require a prescription to be used legally. Most illegal steroids are smuggled in from other countries, stolen from pharmacies or made in illegitimate laboratories.

The most commonly encountered anabolic steroids on the illicit market include:

- Testosterone
- Nandrolone
- Methenolone
- Stanozolol
- Methandrostenolone

Side Effects

The negative short-term physical effects of anabolic steroid abuse include:

- Cardiovascular diseases, such as heart attacks, strokes and blood clots that damage the heart muscle – even in individuals under the age of 30.
- Liver problems, including cancerous tumors.
- Undesirable body changes, including breast development and genital shrinking in men, and masculinization of the body in women.
- Acne, cysts, oily hair and skin and hair loss.
- Also, steroid abusers who share or use non-sterile needles are at risk for contracting dangerous infections, such as HIV/AIDS and hepatitis B and C.

Though the long-term physical effects of anabolic steroid abuse are not known, studies show that their use can take a heavy toll on a person's health over time.

