

Venomous Texas Snakes

The College Station Fire Department hopes to provide simple and timely safety and first aid information about the venomous snakes found in the state. It is important to remember that not every snake is venomous, and that, while the very mention of the word often sends chills up the spine of many people, snakes do have an important role in our Texas ecosystem. Their contribution in controlling rodents can hardly be understated. Equally important is an understanding that envenomation is a defensive mechanism for the snake - snakes do not sit in the grass waiting for the unfortunate human to come by. Nor do they pursue or hunt humans. Bites are usually a result of the snake being surprised or cornered, or from someone handling snakes.

[Copperheads](#)

[Cottonmouths](#)

[Rattlesnakes](#)

[Coral Snakes](#)

As our population continues to grow, and people continue to move into 'pristine' and 'untouched' areas, encounters with venomous snakes are going to occur. Many of these encounters occur around the home, with the result that incidents of bites close to home are statistically high.

Snakes in general, occur around a home for the specific purposes of seeking food and shelter. Keeping these things in mind provides us with guidelines to help prevent snakebite around the home.

Keep wood piles, brush piles, trash dumps and livestock pens as far as possible from the residence. When working in these areas, exercise caution. Never put an arm or leg into something if you can not see the bottom.

Keep storage areas and livestock sheds/barns as neat as possible. Treat tools and materials stored on the floor as possible snake shelters. Treat overturned boats, tarps and similar objects as potential shelter for transient snakes moving through the area.

Remember snakes are adept at finding their way through small openings. Keep this in mind when entering crawl spaces, basements, garages and similar areas.

Safety in the Field

Since venomous snakes are common in the rural areas of Texas, it is important for ranchers, hunters, rural residents, outdoor enthusiasts and other that frequent these areas to exercise caution.

Be careful where you put your hands and feet - don't reach or step until you can see the bottom.

Never step over a log without first seeing what is on the other side. If you must move a log - use a long stick or garden tool first, to ensure snakes are neither under, on or around these favored habitats.

Use a flashlight when moving about, even in your home yard, at night.

Animal burrows make excellent habitat for snakes - don't reach in without first checking.

Wear protective clothing if working in areas where you suspect snakes nearby. Heavy footwear, snake proof trousers and/or leggings will help reduce your risk.

Freeze when snakes are known to be nearby until you know where they are. Allow the snake to retreat. If you must move, back slowly and carefully away from the snake.

First Aid

First Aid for snake bites can prevent disability, disfigurement or death if it is applied effectively. The recommendations have changed drastically over the years, and remaining informed on effective first aid should be a priority of everyone working in snake habitat.

- Assume envenomation has occurred even before symptoms appear.
- Identify the species of venomous snake with care. This could help with the medical treatment but will complicate the situation if we have more than one victim.
- Keep the victim as calm as possible. Keep yourself calm as well.
- Know and treat for any symptoms of shock.
- Wash the bite area with a disinfectant soap.
- Remove restrictive clothing or jewelry in the area of the bite.
- Prevent movement of the bitten extremity.
- Get medical attention as soon as possible.
- Under no circumstances should you cut between the punctures, or suck the venom out or apply electric shock.