



VITALS

A Weekly Safety Newsletter For Medical Transport Professionals

Mike Szczygiel (Segal)
888-969-8033
meszczygiel@thomcoins.com

Watch Where You Put Your Hands!



Workers helping to clean the oil spill have more to worry about than the toxicity of the sludge. In addition to copperheads, at least three different kinds of rattlesnakes and water moccasins (all called pit vipers), there are coral snakes (not a pit viper). Annually, there are around 225 snakebites in Louisiana; between 5,000 and 8,000 in the entire country, and about a dozen people die from envenomation.

Officials are working to make sure that there is plenty of antivenin. About three quarters of Louisiana hospitals have enough to treat one victim of a serious pit viper bite. When there is not enough pit viper antivenin at a hospital, either more is brought in or the patient is transferred. The resources available for the victims of coral snake bites are critically limited.



There are only around a half a dozen vials of coral snake antivenin in Louisiana. No American manufacturer produces it or has plans to begin production. Current supplies are set to expire in October, but the FDA may extend the shelf life. A Mexican company makes a coral snake antivenin, but it is not approved by the FDA.

Coral snake venom causes paralysis. Without antivenin, victims may need intubation and ventilation for several days. This may be followed by a protracted period of weakness. Information about antivenin can be obtained from your local poison control center or large zoo. Other sources of antivenin information include: the Arizona Poison Control Center at 520-626-6016 or the Oklahoma Poison Control Center at 405-271-5854.



Clearly, an ounce of prevention is better than multiple vials of care. Some of the things coastal workers should think about are applicable as we do our Spring yard work.

- Don't put your hands where you can't see them (like under debris)
- Wear heavy gloves
- Watch for snakes sunning themselves on tree limbs, not just on the ground or debris. Snakes are poikilotherms. They take on the temperature of the environment.
- Let a moving snake pass. A snake's striking distance is usually about half its length.
- To be effective "snake protective" boots should be 10 inches high
- If bitten, try to note the color of the snake and the shape of its head, but remember snakes can strike multiple times
- It's probably not a bad idea to review snakebite protocols and first aid standards.



Sign Up for The
EVOC - "T3" Train-the-Trainer Course
August 25-27 in Iowa, or September 22-24 in California

American Integrated Training Systems, Inc. (AITS) is conducting an EVOC Train the Trainer course in conjunction with the Delaware TWP Fire Department, August 25-27 in Des Moines, Iowa, and with San Diego Medical Service in San Diego, California on September 22-24. The course will qualify instructors to present the classroom portion of the training and provide an orientation to the practical driving exercises. Each participant will act as a student and coach for ambulance driving exercises. Cost is \$575 and registration closes August 20. For more information please contact Billy Rutherford at 703-440-0914 or brutherf@aitstraining.com.