

SAFETY ALERT

SNAKE AWARENESS



How to Prevent this Type of Incident

Conduct a thorough risk assessment to include the risk of encounters with snakes. Factors such as, warmer weather and work environments where there may be long grass, debris, close to water ways and parks should be considered.

Employers, including Host Employers should prepare a procedure for workers to appropriately deal with snake encounters.

To minimise the potential risk of snake encounters the following should be considered;

- remove any debris lying around the worksite
- use a tool to pick up objects dropped amid long grass or plants;
- if you spot a snake, let it move away on its own and alert your co-workers;
- wear protective clothing i.e., high ankle safety boots and thick gloves.



What Happened

On 17 November 2015 an apprentice and his supervisor were working at a residential property in Aldgate, removing an existing roof. As the supervisor was handing down old roof tiles to the apprentice, the apprentice heard a rustle in the grass next to him. He noticed a snake approximately a meter way from him. The apprentice was startled by the encounter and in response picked up an old gutter guard to protect him from the potential threat. Whilst handling the gutter guard, the apprentice lacerated his palm below the left index finger. He was provided with immediate first aid and transported to the nearest medical clinic for treatment.

Why did it Happen

The apprentice's reaction to seeing the snake should have been to step back and allow the snake to move away.

The worker was not wearing protective gloves at the time.

A risk assessment to include the hazard of snake encounters was not taken into consideration.



Summary

An employer must, so far as reasonably practicable, provide a safe work place for their workers. This involves worksite inspection and risk assessment before commencing work. By completing these steps, hazards identified, including snakes can be appropriately managed to remove or reduce the risk to an expectable level.

If you or someone at work is bitten by a snake, call '000' for medical attention immediately.

Need More Information

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