Wildlife in the Workplace Meeting Kit



WILDLIFE HAZARDS IN THE WORKPLACE

Outside of poisonous or disease-carrying insects there are other hazards wildlife in the workplace poses. One major hazard is the distractions animals or insects can create. Whether it is a huge majestic elk in your construction area or the buzzing fly that keeps landing on your face in the cab of your crane they both serve as a distraction from the task at hand. Eliminating distractions is an important part of creating a safe work environment and when there is certain wildlife in your work area this can create problems.

WORKERS CO – EXISTING WITH WILDLIFE

- Encounters with wild animals have gone up in recent decades and as humans seek to occupy more of their habitat, incidents can be expected. Domestic dogs, cannot be avoided by workers who, for example, deliver packages or mail in residential areas. By knowing why wild and domestic animals strike out at humans and what to do to avoid animals in the first place, workers can limit the possibility of an encounter and of being injured.
- It’s important for workers to always remember that, by nature, most wild animals want to avoid humans.
- Hungry, diseased or injured animals as well as animals that have become habituated to humans can lose their intuition – their natural avoidance triggers – and do things they wouldn’t normally do, including approaching a human. In most cases, animals are very fearful of humans and do everything they can to avoid humans.
- Many of the conflicts are caused by humans, often because we unintentionally attract them. Animals are drawn to work sites by the food and waste humans leave exposed. On work sites, food should be kept tightly stored and garbage put away in double plastic bags or animal-resistant bins.
- When we clear the land and create open, grassy areas, we attract carnivores who want to feed on berry bushes and grasses and on the prey species that are also drawn to the new open areas. These cleared areas also provide new pathways for animals.
- Wildlife likes the path of least resistance: They’re not going to expend calories walking through thick muskeg, wetlands and thick forest when there’s a nice, clear path like a power line. They will stick to the power line; they’ll go down the linear feature that’s an easier path.
- Wild animals need their space and workers must be careful not to violate it too much. When they see wild animals, especially younger ones, people tend to want

to get closer. But, where there are young animals, the parents are usually nearby and can become quite aggressive, whether they’re bears, moose, caribou or another animal.
- When animals have offspring, their defensive mechanisms become even greater. Keep your distance. If you want to watch, use binoculars instead of trying to get a selfie. It’s up to worker to recognize that wild animals are wild and because they are wild, they can be unpredictable. It’s up to us to use our common sense to avoid any of the risks that may occur as a result of our interference with where they live.

REDUCE THE RISK

1. Know Your Local Wildlife

- Ticks and other insects tend to live in areas that have high grass or are wooded
- Mosquitoes are present around areas of standing water
- If you work in a more urban environment, you are more likely to encounter stray dogs and sometimes even animals like raccoons
- Snakes are found all over the world in different environments

1. Take Preventative Steps

- Clear the worksite to decrease the likelihood that animals will stay in the area
    - Snakes like to hide under leaf and wood piles
    - Large amounts of trash may attract stray dogs or raccoons
    - Cut grass to keep ticks out
    - Remove standing water to discourage mosquito reproduction
- Wear the appropriate clothing for your work environment to reduce tick and other insect bites
- Use insect repellant to reduce the chance of receiving insect bites
- Keep a first aid kit on site

1. Appropriately Interact with Wildlife

- Avoid feeding them as they will learn to come around the worksite more often
- If you are bitten by an animal, seek medical attention
- Gather information about the animal that bit you and provide it to the doctor and local animal control authorities

FINAL WORD

It is important to not only consider the disease carrying insects or the predators that could be around your work area, but all types of wildlife. Find ways to mitigate the issues that these creatures can create for you at work.