Summertime, Summertime, Sum, Sum

Summertime…

More and more mountain resorts are beginning to take advantage of summertime revenue opportunities. Some resorts have not historically operated during summer months other than for routine summer maintenance and have not had to deal with summertime exposures on a large scale. Two special risks and exposures that are specific to summer are Bugs and Lightning….. but not lightning bugs!

Many buildings and grounds around mountain resorts are crawling with an assortment of insects every summer. Whether you’re working on the mountain or in the basement of the ski lodge, summer months provide the greatest risk for contact with insects. While most insects go almost completely unnoticed there are some that can create an unpleasant encounter with people. Primarily we need to be concerned about our mountain staff, as every mountain resort, whether or not it is open for the public during the summer months, has a variety of maintenance projects that are ongoing. Secondarily, there is a duty of care to our public guests to take measures that reduce the likelihood of contact with unpleasant insects.

The severity of a reaction from an insect sting or bite varies greatly from person to person. An allergic reaction is the most serious and requires immediate medical attention. The most common stinging insects in the US that trigger an allergic reaction are yellow-jackets, honeybees, bumblebees, wasps, hornets and fire ants. The symptoms of an allergic reaction may include any or all of the following; difficulty breathing, a red itchy rash, swelling of the face or throat, difficulty swallowing, rapid pulse, dizziness or sharp drop in blood pressure. While severe allergic reactions do not occur often, they can lead to shock, unconsciousness, and cardiac arrest within 10 minutes or less. Even if you have never had an allergic reaction from an insect sting you may still be at risk as some allergic reactions do not occur until after multiple stings. If stung or bitten on the hand, immediately remove any rings, as the fingers are likely to swell. If stung by a bee, remove the stinger if possible and wash the area with soap and water, then apply an antiseptic. If there is swelling, apply an ice pack or cold compress to reduce pain and swelling, and elevate the affected area.

If you see lightning strike someone, immediately call for medical assistance. If possible move the victim to a safe location because lightning can strike twice at the same place. Make sure the person is breathing and has a pulse. Stop any major bleeding and if not breathing begin CPR until help arrives.

A building usually offers good protection. Stay away from windows and doors. Don’t use the telephone or other electrical appliances including the computer as a lightning strike can conduct through these devices to the user. An excellent shelter is a fully enclosed metal vehicle with the windows completely shut.

If you hear thunder or see lightning you should stop your activities to assess the location of the electrical storm and if necessary, seek shelter. Avoid water, high ground, open spaces, light poles, metal fences, trees and tents. In a forested area, pick an area of dense growth and crouch down in a baseball catcher’s stance with your hands on your knees. If you are with other people stay 15 feet apart.

A Risk Management Bulletin For Resorts

Resort To Safety

July 2009

Prepared by the Sports & Recreation Division of Wells Fargo Special Risks

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During summer operations or maintenance, be sure to have a first aid kit on hand, reliable communications and immediate transportation available. When working at remote locations always work as a team with never less than two people. If you are stung by an insect try to remove the stinger right away by scraping sideways with your fingernail or credit card. If tweezers are available, pull the stinger out if possible. As soon as possible, apply ice or a cold compress to reduce pain and swelling, and elevate the affected area.

Lightning poses a significant threat to life. Every year an average of 73 people are killed and over 300 are injured due to lightning. Risk of a lightning strike is greatest during the summer months, and if you hear thunder, you’re already within the range of a possible lightning strike.

People at greatest risk of being struck by lightning are those who are working or playing outside. When you first hear thunder or see lightning you should stop your activities to assess the location of the electrical storm and if necessary, seek shelter. Avoid water, high ground, open spaces, light poles, metal fences, trees and tents. In a forested area, pick an area of dense growth and crouch down in a baseball catcher’s stance with your hands on your knees. If you are with other people stay 15 feet apart.

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ANSI states that “…no aerial lift shall operate when there is an electrical storm in the immediate vicinity”. Your operational procedures need to be reviewed to determine your resort’s “immediate vicinity” and spotters need to be trained to observe the skies as well as other computerized weather monitoring equipment you may have. When an electrical storm approaches your immediate vicinity stop loading passengers immediately and unload all passengers from the lift. Take the time now to review your anticipated shelter needs and be certain that you have adequate capacity for all employees and guests.