

Leader Recommendations: Cover this tailboard during spring and summer.

Topic Overview:

There are many different species of snakes in California, including eight species of rattlesnakes. In general, it is best to avoid snakes; particularly rattlesnakes, as they are venomous and can strike a distance up to half their body length. Be aware of your surroundings and do not attempt to touch or pick up a snake you encounter in the field. The vibrations from walking allow snakes to determine how close you are. If you are close enough to hear a tail rattle, do not make any sudden moves. Freeze and see if you can determine through audible and visual clues the exact location of the snake. Then move slowly away in the opposite direction. If you see or hear a snake in the field, you should travel backwards and then go around the area where the snake is or choose an alternate path.

Risks, Exposures and Preventative Steps to Take:

What to do if you encounter a snake while working or on a job site:

If a snake is present on a job site and preventing work from getting done, the job needs to be stopped until the hazard is corrected, either by waiting until the snake leaves on its own or is removed. The best option is to simply wait for the snake to move. However, depending on the time of day, or if it feels threatened, a snake may not move on its own.

As you can see below, snakes have adapted to their surroundings and use camouflage to conceal themselves from both prey and predator. It is not always easy to tell a rattlesnake from a harmless snake. If you are not sure, assume the snake you see or hear is venomous and follow the snake bite avoidance tips.

Northern Pacific Rattlesnake



Sidewinder



Western Diamondback Rattlesnakes



Gopher or Bull Snakes



Gopher snakes, **which are harmless and non-venomous**, can be mistaken for rattlesnakes. To protect themselves, gopher snakes mimic rattlesnakes by rapidly vibrating their tail and when this occurs in dry grass, the sound is very similar to a rattlesnake. Regardless of the species of snake, it's best to just leave them alone.

What **TO DO** if you are bitten by a rattlesnake:

- Remain calm, relocate to a safe place in the shade, sit down, and position the bite location at or below heart level.
- If you have cell coverage, call 911 or your local emergency number.
- Remove jewelry and tight clothing before swelling occurs.

What **NOT TO DO** if you are bitten by a rattlesnake:

- Do not panic and run – this will hasten venom transport in the bloodstream.
- Do not wait for symptoms to appear; if bitten, seek immediate medical attention.
- Do not use a tourniquet, apply ice, immerse in water, cut the wound or try to remove/suck out the venom (new studies have shown suction cups do not extract the venom as previously recommended).
- Do not drink alcohol or caffeinated drinks – this will also hasten venom transport.
- Do not try to capture the snake but take a picture or note its color/pattern.

Rattlesnake bite symptoms:

The severity of rattlesnake bite symptoms will vary depending on the amount of venom released and the type of rattlesnake. Sometimes 'dry bites' occur, when no or very little venom is released. This occurs about 25% of the time when rattlesnakes strike at something other than prey. Most of the time, some venom is released when a rattlesnake bites. If only a little venom is released, symptoms are mild to moderate. These symptoms include mild swelling, skin discoloration, and mild to moderate pain at the wound site with tingling sensations, rapid pulse, and muscle weakness, dimness of vision, nausea, vomiting, and shortness of breath. When more venom is released, symptoms may be more severe and include rapid swelling and numbness, followed by severe pain at the wound site and in association with swelling. Other symptoms may include pinpoint pupils, twitching, slurred speech, shock, convulsions, paralysis, unconsciousness, or no pulse or breathing.

Never handle dead rattlesnakes – freshly killed rattlesnakes can still inject venom, and dried venom can remain potent for years.



Equipment and Personal Protective Equipment:

Employees may be performing work directly in or near rattlesnake environments. In some cases, rattlesnakes are found in PG&E watersheds, often in storage type containers or in proximity to our facilities. Determine exposure risks prior to working in these areas. Take steps in advance:

- Conduct a JHA (use new "Venomous Snake JHA Form". Link below under other resources).
- Incorporate and discuss hazards during safety plans (pre-job briefings).
- Take action to protect employees; use PPE and perform safety observations.

PPE & Guidance:

• Employee Awareness and Knowledge

- Employee awareness and knowledge combined with avoidance are the most effective controls (Tailboard: S&H 'Snake Awareness and Bite Avoidance'). While effective PPE is the last and least effective resort, employees who are working in areas where rattlesnake encounters are likely should consider using appropriate PPE based on the specific task, situation, environment and available approved options.

• Hand Protection / Gloves:

- Heavy duty leather cut and puncture-resistant Kevlar, and leather/Kevlar combinations are available in a variety of styles and sizes. These are most effectively used when the task requires employees to put their hand(s) in locations where clear line-of-site is obstructed, such as brushy areas, inside pipe or conduit, inside enclosed cabinets, dark openings or sub-surface structures. In general, gloves with extended cuffs or gauntlets are more effective. Chemical resistant and light-duty gloves, such as nitrile, rubber, cotton and mechanic's style gloves are usually not effective against snake bites, although they may be utilized in conjunction with heavy-duty gloves if other hazards exist in addition to punctures and snake bites.

When selecting the appropriate glove, consideration should be given to the following:

- The nature of the hazard(s);
- The ability to engineer out or eliminate the hazard;
- The need for flexibility and manual dexterity; and
- The potential effectiveness of the glove selected.

- **Leg Protection:** Snakes can bite through most fabric. There are several types of chaps and gaiters currently available for additional protection. As with glove selection, it is critical to consider the task being performed and the environment.



CAUTION

Some leg protection is intended for very specific purposes (e.g., chain saw chaps are designed to snag a chain saw and interfere with cutting action, which could create a worse hazard in rattlesnake areas). There is **one** approved gaiter that is waterproof and snake bite/puncture-resistant: Ben Meadows Snake Guardz. It is important to note that these gaiters are *not* FR rated. Employees that are required to wear FR clothing should don the gaiters when they are in rattlesnake environments but remove them prior to performing electrical work to ensure their FR clothing provides protection.

Image	Description	Availability / Your Price
	Accessories, Footwear BEN MEADOWS 152675XL - GAITER, SNAKE SIZE XLARGE SNAKE GUARDZ 1/EA More... Your# BM152675XL	Price: \$79.95 pr <input type="checkbox"/> Qty Add to Cart
	Accessories, Footwear BEN MEADOWS 152675L - GAITER, SNAKE SIZE LARGE SNAKE GUARDZ 1/EA More... Your# BM152675L	Price: \$79.95 pr <input type="checkbox"/> Qty Add to Cart



- **Boots/Shoes:** Sturdy enclosed leather boots or shoes are recommended when working in areas where rattlesnakes are likely to be present. Again, footwear with high tops is more effective than low-rise options. Canvas, cloth, thin leather or plastic footwear is generally neither appropriate nor effective in locations where rattlesnakes are likely.
- **JHA/Pre-Job Briefing:** Discuss with all employees that work in in the field the potential for rattlesnake exposure. Conduct JHA prior to performing work.

Procedures, Standards and Resources:

Snake eradication, removal or relocation:

It is important to understand that not all local animal control officers will respond to remove a snake. Likewise, few pest control agencies are equipped to handle snakes. If you need someone to assist with the removal of a snake contact a local professional. Most areas with a large snake population have professionals who are trained to deal with snake removal. Understand that professionals who perform this work can be costly, so weigh the costs of hiring a professional with stopping work until the snake moves on its own.

Identify who within your area can manage the removal of a venous snake; contact the local animal control, a pest control company or pest specialist to confirm who can assist and provide their name(s) and contact to all employees during the tailboard.

Here is a short list of resources that may provide snake removal services:

- [Ramirez Rattlesnake Removal](#) (Auburn)
- [Animal Capture and Removal](#) (Sacramento, Yolo, contra costa, Napa, Sonoma, Marin)
- [USA Animal Control](#) (Shasta, Anderson, Red Bluff, Chico, Oroville, Paradise, Eureka, Yuba City, Marysville, Susanville)
- [Don't Tread on Me Rattlesnake Removal](#) (Sacramento, Placer, Yuba, Sutter, Yolo, El Dorado, Amador, Calaveras, Nevada, Contra Costa, etc.) Rocklin (916) 259-4496
- Snake Catchers, 13668 McKittrick Ranch Road, Nevada City. (530) 615-7271
- Critter Control, 5347 Rattlesnake Bar Rd, Pilot Hill, CA 95664 (530) 889-8406
- [OC Snake Removal](#) (San Bernardino County)
- Orkin Pest Control Services may remove snakes (check with local dealer)

Other resources and links:

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Personal Protective Equipment Standard SAFE-1005S](#)
- [Ariba – Gaiter Snake Options](#)
- [JHA – Job Task Hiking, Patrolling, and working in Snake environments](#)
- [S&H Rattlesnake Awareness, PPE & JHA 5MM](#)

