

news & notes

GREEN TOBACCO SICKNESS

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) have jointly issued a bulletin called "[Green Tobacco Sickness](#)" that identifies serious health hazards related to work in tobacco fields, as well as steps employers can take to protect the health of farm workers.

The bulletin also identifies vulnerable workers, including children and adolescents, who may be more sensitive to chemical exposure and more likely to suffer from green tobacco sickness, and who may suffer more serious health consequences than adults.

Approximately 90 percent of domestic tobacco production occurs in Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina, the latter of which accounts for nearly half of all production. The department is committed to working with these states to protect the health and safety of young agricultural workers generally, including on tobacco farms.



August 2015

Time for Lyme

Protect yourself from Lyme Disease

Warmer weather means ticks. The national [Lyme Disease Association](#) (LDA) reminds everyone that ticks, which transmit Lyme disease, become more active when temperatures are above 35 degrees Fahrenheit.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), more cases of Lyme disease are reported than any other vector-borne disease in the United States. In 2011, the CDC reported 33,097 Lyme disease cases in the United States. With only 10 percent of cases actually reported, numbers may actually exceed 300,000 annually.

Most of these cases are reported from the Northeast and upper Midwest. The top 10 states for Lyme disease in 2011 were:

1. Pennsylvania
2. New York
3. New Jersey
4. Wisconsin
5. Connecticut
6. Massachusetts
7. Minnesota
8. Maryland
9. New Hampshire
10. Virginia

Legislators in 19 states have introduced bills in recent years to address Lyme disease. See LDA's website for [a state-by-state Lyme legislation table](#).

Lyme disease is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*. People become infected with the Lyme disease bacteria when they are bitten by an infected blacklegged tick. The CDC cautions that ticks can also transmit diseases other than Lyme disease, including Rocky Mountain spotted fever, ehrlichiosis, anaplasmosis, Colorado tick fever, and Powassan encephalitis.

As employees start spending more time working or just being outdoors during spring and into summer, they have to be aware of the risk of tick bites. If not diagnosed and treated early, the LDA says Lyme disease can lead to disseminated infection affecting every system in the body, including the cardiac and central nervous systems. Mental confusion, memory problems, weakness, arthritis, and gastrointestinal problems may occur. For more on Lyme disease and prevention tips, click [here](#).

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HEAT APP & WEBSITE

In a joint media teleconference National Weather Service (NWS) Deputy Director Laura Furgione and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) administrator David Michaels, PhD, announced that their organizations are teaming up to improve awareness about dangerous heat conditions.

For example, OSHA has enhanced its Heat Safety Tool smartphone app, which allows workers and supervisors to calculate the heat index at their worksite. The app lets the user know instantly if workers are in the high-risk zone due to heat and humidity and indicates the necessary precautions to take. The app is free and available for iPhone and Android at https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/heat_index/heat_app.html.

In addition, Furgione said the weather service now provides better warnings about the risks and called on meteorologists to include information about worker safety during their broadcasts. NWS has created a new heat safety page at <http://www.weather.gov/rah/heat>.



Pesticide precautions

What you need to know

Summer is upon us and we are now in prime growing season. This is also prime bug season. Of course, some bugs are also known as pests because they can inhibit the growth of, or even kill, plants. That is where pesticides come in.

Whether caring for flora on or off the job, follow these guidelines for working safely around pesticides:

- Be aware of pesticides you can't see—in water, in dust particles, on plants, etc.
- Read pesticide labels and safety data sheets (SDS) to understand hazards and precautions.
- Avoid touching, breathing, or swallowing pesticides—by washing thoroughly before eating, drinking, or using tobacco.
- Observe all established workplace restrictions—stay out of restricted areas.
- Wash thoroughly with soap and water after working with or near pesticides; change into clean clothes.
- Wash work clothes immediately and separately.
- Never take pesticides or used pesticide containers home with you.
- Always wear the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) for the job.
- Know what to do in an emergency.
- Follow all workplace safety procedures.

REMEMBER: Pesticides are poisons—treat them with respect and protect yourself against exposure!

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Poison plants and bugs

Stay safe from poisonous flora and fauna

Protect yourself against poisonous plants by knowing how to identify poisonous plants (for example, “Leaves of three, let them be”). Also, wear protective clothing, including a hat, long-sleeved shirt, gloves, long pants, socks, and outdoor shoes or boots. Follow these five first-aid steps for poisonous plant exposures:

1. Wash when the job's done with soap and water.
2. Wash affected areas three times with soap and water if you know you've had contact with a poisonous plant or are very likely to have had contact.
3. Cleanse skin with rubbing alcohol.
4. Take aspirin or antihistamines and use hydrocortisone cream (or see your doctor for prescription medication for a widespread outbreak).
5. Try not to scratch (because it slows healing).

Avoid insect bites and stings by wearing long sleeves, long pants, socks, gloves, and outdoor shoes; wearing white or light colors; and using insect repellent. DON'T wear perfume or cologne, swat insects, or do outdoor work if severely allergic. If you are highly allergic to insect stings and bites, carry an allergy kit, wear a medical ID tag, and discuss allergy shots with your doctor.

Follow these first-aid steps for insect bites and stings:

- Apply ice.
- Use calamine or hydrocortisone.
- Remove the stinger.