

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS WITH SNAKES

Cooperative Extension Service * University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign * Disaster Resource

Following floods, snakes are often forced into places where they are not usually found. If you live in an area where snakes inhabit, take the following precautions:

1. Learn how to identify poisonous snakes common to your area.
2. Be alert for snakes in unusual places. They may be found in or around homes, barns, outbuildings, driftwood, levees, dikes, dams, stalled automobiles, piles of debris, building materials, trash or any type of rubble or shelter.
3. Before beginning any clean-up or rescue operations, search the premises thoroughly for snakes. They may be under or near any type of protective cover.
4. In rescue or clean-up operations, wear heavy leather or rubber high-topped boots and heavy gloves. Wear trouser legs outside boots. Be extremely careful around debris. Use rakes, pry bars or other long-handed tools when removing debris. Never expose your hands, feet or other parts of your body in a place where a snake might be hiding.
5. Explain to children the dangers of snakes under storm or flood conditions and the precautions they should follow. Do not allow children to play around debris.
6. Nonpoisonous snakes can be captured by pinning the snake down with a longer stick or pole, preferably forked at one end, and then removed by scooping up with a snow shovel or flat-blade shovel.
7. If you are uncomfortable about removing the snake yourself, seek someone within the community who has experience handling snakes. A good starting point is your local wildlife conservation officer or sheriff's department.
8. As a last resort, you may need to kill a poisonous snake. Club it with a long stick, rod or other tool. Never attempt to kill a poisonous snake with an instrument that brings you within the snake's striking range (usually estimated at less than one-half the total length of the snake).
9. If you realize you are near a snake, avoid sudden movement. Sudden movement may cause the snake to strike. If you remain still the snake may leave. If the snake does not move away from you after a few minutes, slowly back away from it.
10. Most snakes are not harmful or poisonous. Most snakes can be coaxed to leave the area, or will leave on their own.

11. If someone is bitten by a poisonous snake, call a doctor or go to the nearest hospital immediately.

Controlling snakes

To get rid of snakes in a building and to prevent others from entering:

1. Remove snakes' food supply. Eliminating rats and mice from an area will often discourage snakes.
2. Remove snakes' hiding places. Get rid of lumber piles, trash piles, high weeds, grasses and debris.
3. Block openings where snakes might enter buildings. Snakes can pass through extremely small openings and usually enter near or below ground level. Be sure doors, windows and screens fit tightly. Search walls and floors for holes or crevices. Inspect the masonry of foundations, fireplaces and chimneys; plug or cement cracks. Plug spaces around pipes that go through outside walls. Fasten galvanized screen over drains or ventilators, or over large areas of loose construction.

Source: Dr. David Bromwell
Chief Veterinarian of Animal Welfare for
the state of Illinois

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For more information contact your local Extension office:



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