

INDUSTRY WIDE LABOR-MANAGEMENT SAFETY COMMITTEE

SAFETY BULLETIN #31

SAFETY AWARENESS WHEN WORKING AROUND INDIGENOUS WILDLIFE

When working with animals and/or venomous reptiles refer to Safety Bulletins #6: "*Animal Handling Rules for the Motion Picture Industry*" and #12: "*Guidelines for the Use of Venomous Reptiles.*"

This bulletin addresses special safety considerations when working on locations where various indigenous wildlife species may be present. Although the types of wildlife may vary from region to region, basic safeguards should be taken to prevent serious injury or illness to cast and crew members. Never touch or handle wildlife. Wild animals are not trained animal actors and are not familiar with humans.

PRE-PLANNING

"Wildlife" awareness starts during the initial search for locations. The location manager, his or her department representative, 1st AD, production management, studio safety department representative, and/or any medical personnel assigned to the project should consider safety precautions when pre-planning and preparing to use a location that may contain some type of indigenous wildlife. They should identify the type(s) of wildlife present, the location of nearby hospitals or medical facilities, and the availability of any anti-venom that may be required.

Pre-planning may also include contacting the local zoo to see if they have the appropriate anti-venom and alerting them that you will be working in the area, especially if the production will be working with animal actors that could escape. Contact should be made with local wildlife authorities such as State Fish and Game to determine the protected status of indigenous wildlife in the area, and any special safety concerns.

It is production's responsibility to assure the safety of the indigenous wildlife in the filming area and to consult the agency or persons responsible for the removal of wildlife from location sets. Any such indigenous wildlife that remains on the set are subject to American Humane Association (AHA) Guidelines and Procedures, including but not limited to:

Section 8-280 states, if native animals are not to remain on the set, they must be carefully removed, relocated, or properly housed and cared for, then safely returned to their habitat after filming is complete. Only qualified and trained personnel should attempt the removal of nests or hives.

Section 8-284 states, a production may not intentionally harm and must take precautionary measures to protect nests, dens, caves, caverns, etc.

Section 8-290 states, care must be taken to ensure that non-indigenous animals are removed from the area after the production has completed filming.

Animal actors brought to a location can be affected by other indigenous wildlife. This could range from distraction to life-threatening situations or the transmittal of diseases. Notification should be provided to the professional trainer/supplier of the animal actors.

If you have additional questions regarding the AHA's Guidelines for the Safe Use of Animals in Filmed Media, contact the Film and Television Unit at (818) 501-0123.

GENERAL SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Once the various types of indigenous wildlife that could be at the location and other work zones are identified, a safety meeting to review safety precautions, including those contained in this Safety Bulletin, should take place. Any cast and crew members that may come in contact with the indigenous wildlife should attend.

Safety meeting topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Types of wildlife that may be present at the location including all work zones.
- Possible risks to cast and crew.
- Communication plan.
- Emergency procedures.
- Local government wildlife rules and restrictions.

While working around wildlife, it is advisable to wear long pants with the pant legs tucked into socks or boots. A good boot above the ankle will provide better protection than sandals or sneakers. It is also advisable to wear a long-sleeved shirt, dress in layers, and wear light colors. Generally, insects are dark in color; they are spotted easily against a light background. Avoid heavy perfumes or after-shaves as they attract some pests.

If a pesticide is being used to control pests, follow manufacturers' instructions including the proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE) as noted on the product label and/or Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for persons applying the product or entering the treated area. Allow time for dissipation prior to using a treated location.

If using a repellent, apply according to the label instructions on the product. Applying the repellent directly to clothing appears to be most effective. The SDS for any pesticide or repellent must be available to all cast and crew upon request.

In the case of bites or stings, serious allergic reactions are possible. If you have any known allergies, notify the set medic and/or safety representative prior to or when you first arrive at the location.

If you are bitten or stung by any indigenous wildlife, immediately contact the set medic. If the encounter with the indigenous wildlife involves a life-threatening situation, **call 911.**

For additional precautions or questions, contact the studio safety representative, production management, local health department, set medic, or local experts in the area.

INDIGENOUS WILDLIFE

Since there are many types of wildlife throughout the world, this Safety Bulletin cannot cover all the possibilities. However, the following are some of the more commonly encountered wildlife on locations:

1. Ants:

- Are red, brown, or black in color and have a three-segment body with six legs.
- Are found everywhere, and their bites are mild to painful.
- Special precautions should be taken when working around red fire ants to keep from being bitten.

2. Ticks:

- Are red, brown, or black in color and have a hard-shelled body with eight legs.
- Some types are very small in size and difficult to detect.

- Are found in open fields, overgrown vegetation, wooded areas, and on or near animals.
- Live on deer, mice, and birds.
- Do not attempt to remove ticks by using any of the following:
 - Lighted cigarettes
 - Matches
 - Nail polish
 - Vaseline
- **If bitten**, seek medical attention immediately. Ticks are known to carry many types of diseases such as tick paralysis, Lyme disease, and Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

3. **Scorpions:**

- Are tan, brown, or black in color and have a hard-shelled body with eight legs, claws, and a barbed tail.
- When a scorpion stings, it whips its tail forward over its head.
- Can be found under rocks or fallen wood and are most common in the desert and southwest.
- All stings are painful, however, very few are fatal.

4. **Stinging, Flying Insects (Bees, Hornets and Wasps):**

- Are black, yellow, or red in color and have a three-segment body with wings, and a tail stinger.
- Can be found everywhere and can produce a mild to painful sting which can cause allergic reactions in some.
- **If stung**, seek medical attention and notify the set medic. People who are allergic should carry reaction medication.
- Are generally dormant at night with the exception of mosquitoes.
- Identification of Africanized bees (AKA "killer bees") is very difficult. Remember this type of bee is very aggressive and will attack in swarms. Extreme care should be taken if a hive is located.

5. **Biting Insects**

a. **Mosquitoes and Flies**

There are many different species of mosquitoes and flies in the United States. They can be found in wooded areas, near or on animals, refuse areas, or water, particularly standing water.

NOTE: These insects can carry various types of diseases. Malaria and dengue fever are not found just in tropical locations, it has been found in the United States. Asian "tiger mosquitoes" have been found in the Southern California area and are known to carry dengue fever.

b. **Chiggers**

- Are red, tiny, and smear red when crushed.
- Are prevalent throughout the southern part of the United States.
- Live on the ground, around shrubs and plants, or anywhere vegetation will protect them.
- Prefer shade and moist areas, but will forage for food at great distances.
- Can also detect a food source from a great distance.
- Bites produce blisters by irritating the skin.
- Use chigger bite ointment to remove the itch and promote healing.

6. **Poisonous Spiders**

a. **Black Widow Spider**

- Are black in color and have a two-segment body with eight legs and a red hourglass design on the abdomen.
- Are prominent in warm climates and prefer cool, dry, and dark places.
- Can produce painful to fatal bites.

b. **Brown Widow Spider**

- Are tan and brown with black accent markings, have a two-segment body with eight legs, and an orange hourglass on the abdomen.
- Are an invasive species that have become well established throughout the southern United States, including Southern California.
- Builds its web in secluded, protected sites around homes and woody vegetation.
- Can produce painful bites but rarely cause severe symptoms in humans.

c. **Brown Recluse Spider**

- Are brown in color, have a two-segment body with eight legs and a violin-shaped design on the abdomen.
- Can produce painful to fatal bites.

7. **Snakes**

Consider obtaining a professional snake handler when working locations known to contain indigenous poisonous snakes.

a. **Pit Vipers (Rattlesnakes, Copperheads, Cottonmouths, etc.)**

- Come in sixteen (16) distinctive varieties.
- Most have triangular-shaped heads.
- There are numerous subspecies and color variations of rattlesnakes, but the jointed rattles on the tail can positively identify all.
- While most are concentrated in the southwest United States, they have extended north, east, and south in increasing numbers and varieties so that every contiguous state has one or more varieties.
- Pit Vipers produce painful to fatal bites and do not have to be coiled to strike. For example, a rattlesnake can strike out for one-half of its body length.

b. Other Exotic Snakes

- Another type of poisonous snake indigenous to the United States is the **coral snake**. Its body is entirely covered in bright bands of black, red, and yellow. Narrow bright yellow rings separate wider red and black rings.
- Other international locations may have various other exotic snakes indigenous to the area (cobra, black mamba, etc.). These snakes produce fatal bites; therefore, the location of anti-venom is extremely important.
- Different anti-venom will be required for each species.
- Consult with local experts and governmental authorities.

If bitten:

- Seek immediate medical attention.
- Attempt to note the time and area of the body bitten.
- Immediately immobilize the body part affected.
- Do not apply a tourniquet, incise the wound, or attempt to suck out the venom.
- Do not allow the victim to engage in physical activity.

Tips for Snake Avoidance:

- Always look where you are putting your feet and hands.
- Never reach into a hole, into a crevice in rock piles, under rocks, or into dark places where a snake may be hiding. If you need to turn over rocks, use a stick.
- Attempt to stay out of tall grass, if you can. Walk in cleared spots as much as possible. Step on logs, not over them so that you can first see whether there is a rattlesnake concealed below on the far side.
- Be cautious when picking up equipment, coiled cables, and bags left on the ground.
- Never pick up a snake or make quick moves if you see or hear a rattle. If bitten by a snake, remember what it looked like. Various snakes require different anti-venoms.
- Remember that most snakes are protectively colored (camouflaged)

- On hot summer days, snakes can become nocturnal and come out at night when you do not expect it. Care should be taken when working at night after a hot summer day

8. Alligator and Crocodiles

- Can be found in various waterways around the world.
- Have been known to attack large animals and humans and will exit the water to attack prey on the shoreline.
- Can be found in both fresh and saltwater.
- Both have been known to ambush their victims.

9. Sharks, Sea Urchins, Rays, Scorpion Fish, Jellyfish and Other Exotic Marine Life

When working around water environments, you should contact and consult with local experts, studio safety representatives, or medical staff to become familiar with the wildlife in or around the water environment in question.

10. Rodents

- Locations that may involve the use of alleyways, beneath bridges, tunnels, abandoned buildings, or other structures, may involve potential contact with rats, squirrels, and other rodents.
- Can carry various types of diseases, which can be contracted if bitten by one of these rodents or by a flea, tick, or mite that has fed on an infected rodent. Diseases, such as hantavirus pulmonary syndrome, can also be transmitted by coming in contact with an infected rodent's urine, droppings, or saliva.
- Refer to Safety Bulletin #26: "*Preparing Urban Exterior Locations for Filming*", for precautions and cleaning of locations that may have these types of rodents present.

11. Coyotes

Coyotes are found throughout North America and roam the plains, forests, mountains, and deserts of Canada, United States, Mexico, and Central America. Many coyotes have adapted to urban areas because of easy access to food. They are seen in residential areas, vacant lots, hillsides, parks, city streets, freeways, landscaped areas, abandoned properties, horse trails, fire roads, flood channels, storm drains, and

aqueducts. Since many of these areas are used for filming locations, productions should follow these safety guidelines:

- Do not feed coyotes. It is illegal to feed predatory mammals in many jurisdictions.
- Do not leave small children or animals unattended at an outdoor location.
- Be aware that coyotes are more active in the spring.
- Remove all food at the end of the day and store securely.
- Put garbage in tightly closed containers if left overnight.
- If approached by a coyote:
 - Maintain eye contact and lift and wave your arms.
 - Shout in a low, loud tone.
 - Make yourself look as big as possible.
 - If you are wearing a jacket, take it off and swing around over your head.
 - Throw objects at the coyote while maintaining eye contact.
 - Do not turn your back and run from the coyote as that could trigger a chase.

12. Mountain Lions

Mountain lions, also called cougars, panthers, or pumas, generally inhabit areas wherever deer are found. Mountain lions are quiet, solitary, and typically avoid people. When filming in locations where mountain lions may be present, follow these safety guidelines:

- Always be aware of your surroundings.
- Always try and work in groups. Do not work alone.
- Do not leave small children or animals unattended.
- Provide sturdy shelters for any animal actors when not working.
- Do not approach a mountain lion.
- If you encounter a mountain lion:
 - Do not run as this may trigger a predatory response.

- Face the animal, make noise, and try to appear larger and more aggressive.
- Open your jacket, raise your arms, and throw stones or other objects without turning away.
- Never bend over or crouch down. Try to remain standing to protect your head and neck.
- Pick up small children without turning away or bending over.
- If attacked, fight back with whatever is at hand.

13. Black Bears

Black bears are the only species of bear found in California, and range in color from blonde to black. Black bears generally live in areas with thick vegetation and rough terrain and away from human populations. When their food sources become scarce, they can roam into more urban areas to forage. Black bears will normally seek to avoid confrontation with humans. If encountered on location, always leave them an escape route and follow these safety guidelines:

- Never approach a bear or pick up a bear cub.
- Do not make eye contact and slowly back away. Do not run. Give the bear a way out.
- If you cannot back away, face the animal, make loud noises and try to appear as large as possible by lifting and waving your arms.
- Bear spray can be an effective deterrent but make sure you know how to use it properly.
- If attacked, fight back. **Do not "play dead."**

Bears are attracted to anything that is edible or has strong odors. Bears have also learned to recognize ice chests and coolers in locations such as campgrounds, where bears and humans are in frequent contact. They have been known to break into vehicles if the ice chests or coolers are left out in plain sight. The following tips can help reduce the likelihood of bears being drawn to a location:

- Maintain a clean location site.
- Clean dishes and store food immediately after meals.

- Ensure all food is stored in airtight containers and out of sight and out of reach of bears.
- Remove garbage regularly.
- Advise the cast and crew not to use heavily scented cosmetics and deodorants.

14. **Grizzly Bears**

Grizzly bears, also known as brown bears, are one of the largest North American land mammals. The grizzly is larger than the black bear and is distinguished by a concaved-shaped face, high-humped shoulders, and long, curved claws. Their fur can vary from light brown to nearly black. They can be found in the States of Washington, Idaho, Wyoming, Montana, with the largest population of grizzlies in Alaska. The second-largest population of grizzlies is located mostly in the Province of British Columbia, the Yukon, and the Northwest Territories of Canada.

Always try to remain in groups when in locations that are in bear areas. Most bear encounters end without injury. Like the black bear, grizzly bears will avoid humans if they hear them coming. Most bears are only interested in protecting food, cubs, or their space. Your safety can depend on your ability to stay calm and to calm the bear. If encountered on location and the bear has noticed you and is paying attention to you, the following guidelines can help to lessen the threat of danger:

- Pick up small children and animals immediately.
- Remain calm, do not run. Speak in a low monotone voice and slowly wave your arms. Make yourself look as large as possible.
- The bear may come closer or stand on its hind legs to get a better look or smell.
- A bear may charge in an attempt to intimidate you and then stopping well short of contact.
- Use bear spray if it comes within 25 feet of you or others.

If you are attacked, although rare, grizzly attacks differ from black bear attacks. The following are the most common guidelines in the event of a grizzly bear attack:

- **“Play dead”.**

- Lay flat on your stomach with your hands clasped behind your neck and your legs spread to make it harder for the bear to turn you over. If the bear rolls you over, continue to roll back onto your stomach.
- Remain still until the bear leaves the area.
- If the attack persists, fight back vigorously. Use whatever you have at hand to hit the bear in the face.

Keep In Mind – wherever you may be filming, consider the necessary precautions for any potential indigenous wildlife that may be present.