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OSHA Fact Sheet

Protect Yourself! Workers may be exposed to Brown Recluse Spider

The brown recluse belongs to a group of spiders commonly known as violin spiders or fiddlebacks. The characteristic fiddle-shaped pattern is located on the top of the leg attachment region (cephalothorax). Because they are secluded and withdrawn, as their name implies, the brown recluse avoids open spaces. Brown recluse spiders are dangerous and they can bite and inject toxic venom.

Identification

- Body size: 1/4 to 3/4 inch (6.4-19.1mm)
- Color: Golden brown
- A dark violin/fiddle shape (see top photo) is located on the top of the leg attachment region (cephalothorax) with the neck of the violin/fiddle pointing backward toward the abdomen.
- Unlike most spiders that have 8 eyes, the brown recluse has 6 eyes. The eyes, arranged in pairs – one pair in front and a pair on either side – can be readily seen under low magnification.

Habitat

The Brown Recluse Spider builds small retreat webs behind objects of any type.

Symptoms

- The severity of the bite may vary. Symptoms may vary from none to very severe.
- The bite generally becomes reddened within several hours.



Photo: R. Bessin, University of Kentucky



Photo: creatures.ifas.ufl.edu

- There is often a systemic reaction within 24-36 hours characterized by restlessness, fever, chills, nausea, weakness and joint pain.
- Tissue at the site of the bite and the surrounding area dies and eventually sheds.

Protection

- Wear a long-sleeved shirt, hat, gloves, and boots when handling stored boxes, firewood, lumber and rocks, etc.
- Inspect and shake out clothing and shoes before getting dressed.
- Use insect repellants, such as DEET or Picaridin, on clothing and footwear.

Treatment

- Clean the bite area with soap and water.
- Apply ice to the bite area to slow absorption of the venom.
- Elevate and immobilize the bitten extremity.
- Capture the spider, if at all possible, for identification purposes.
- Seek medical attention.

This is one in a series of informational fact sheets highlighting OSHA programs, policies or standards. It does not impose any new compliance requirements. For a comprehensive list of compliance requirements of OSHA standards or regulations, refer to Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations. This information will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. The voice phone is (202) 693-1999; teletypewriter (TTY) number: (877) 889-5627.

For more complete information:



Occupational
Safety and Health
Administration

U.S. Department of Labor
www.osha.gov
(800) 321-OSHA

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