



Florida Venomous Snake Safety Training Seminar

NAPLES ZOO

Creating Your Own **Venomous Reptile Safety Protocol**

The following steps provide a *suggested* guideline for formulating a proper safety protocol for venomous reptile-bite. **REMEMBER**, many resources including an extensive bibliography and website list are being provided for you to consult and use in the tailor-making of your own safety protocol. You **MUST** consult these or other respected resources while putting together your safety protocol.

1. Include basic venomous reptile-bite first-aid procedures required for all types of situations.
2. Identify special needs depending on whether the protocol is being created for an individual person, family, or business. Businesses - more so than anyone else - should have a formal safety protocol.
3. Document pertinent medical information that might be needed if you, one of your staff, or clients were to get bitten. This could save a life if the victim loses consciousness and cannot provide it to hospital staff. Include specifics on free-bleeding, heart attack, stroke history, or allergies (especially allergies to horse or sheep as antivenins contain blood serum components from these animals). It is also very important to notify medical staff if the victim has ever been bitten before and if they have ever received antivenin. This medical information should be kept on cards or in some easily portable way.
4. A checklist of typical expected symptoms resulting from envenomation should be prepared (see attachment). This list should be placed in all snakebite first-aid kits. Protocols should instruct that this checklist should be completed as quickly as possible in case the victim loses consciousness. Doctors can get some idea of how serious an envenomation might be by noting the presence of and the severity of certain symptoms.

5. Explain in your protocol specific roles and responsibilities for people identified to assist in an event of venomous reptile-bite.

- Designate a specific person such as a dispatcher or secretary as the "Call-In" contact person that has the role of making sure that all emergency information is provided to 911 and Poison Control. This person would always be contacted in the case of a snake bite. A sheet of explicit instructions should be easily accessible to this person. (These same instructions as well as the first-aid instructions should be in all snakebite kits).

Call-In Contact Person Duties:

Call 911 & Call Poison Control
(1-800-222-1222 for South Florida)

Information to provide:

1. A snakebite incident has occurred.
2. Location of the victim.
On the way to the hospital E.R.
In need of ambulatory service (helicopter or vehicle).
3. Victim's name, age, and sex.
4. What, if any, first-aid has been or is being administered.
5. The species of snake that bit the person (NEVER try to catch or otherwise identify a snake if doing so compromises anyone's safety).
6. Document Emergency contact information concerning immediate family members for all your staff.
7. Incidence of venomous reptile-bite is rare. Because of this, many physicians may go their entire career without ever treating a single case. Like all medical care issues, what you, as the patient (or family member or co-worker), may know could possibly make the difference in someone's life. Get informed regarding up-to-date basic Emergency Medical Treatment procedures. Be informed of who the physicians are in your area that are the most informed and have their contact information.
8. Evaluation procedures must be in place to scrutinize any incidence of snakebite. During these kinds of emergency situations people frequently make mistakes. Learning from these mistakes is what will help everyone to be better in the application of first-aid if ever involved with another incident.



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Snake-Bite Symptoms Check-List

- Pain** (typically a severe burning sensation at bite area)
- Swelling & Redness** (localized initially at the area of the bite but may migrate up the limb or to other parts of the body)
- Purple Colored Bruised Area by Bite** (Ecchymosis)
- Nausea**
- Vomiting**
- Increased Heart Rate**
- Metallic Taste in the Mouth**
- Bleeding** (from wound, nose, gums).
- Shortness of Breath**
- Dizziness**
- Impaired Mental Status or Motor Functions** (confusion, slurred speech, droopy eye-lids, difficulty in holding head up, difficulty walking or otherwise moving arms or legs).