

April 2010

# RM News & Notes

## PERSONAL SAFETY TIPS

### Summertime Health Hazards

- 1- **Dehydration**  
Drinking lots of water before, during and after exercise is especially essential. Don't wait until you feel "thirsty".
- 2- **Sunburn**  
No matter how convincing the warnings out there, there are still guys who think their pasty, pallid skin has all the resistant power of the Hulk. Even skin that tans easily is receiving damage.
- 3- **Skin problems**  
People with very dry or sensitive skin are at higher risk for developing serious skin conditions.
- 4- **Overheating**  
If you fail to cool it down when it gets too hot, you can suffer from heat stress (fatigue), heat cramps in your arms and legs, or worse.
- 5- **Insect bites**  
Can cause everything from minor redness and itching to life threatening allergic reactions plus some even spread disease.
- 6- **Eye damage**  
The sun's UV rays can damage your delicate eye.
- 7- **Germs / infections from public places**  
I don't mean to scare you, but public places are cesspools of bacteria.
- 8- **Hay fever**  
Doctors recommend you stay indoors, keep the windows rolled up in your car and keep pets out of the house.
- 9- **Respiratory problems**  
Our air is getting filthier with pollution every day, and more people are developing asthma in industrialized countries. Coincidence?
- 10- **Poison ivy**  
The resin from this plant can cause a severe allergic rash in some people. "Leaves of three, let it be."
- 11- **Swimmer's ear**  
That's what happens when water gets in there but won't leave.

## Emergency & Operations Division Risk Management Department

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### Web Page

<http://www.columbiacountyga.gov/home/index.asp?page=2440>

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## Message from the Risk Manager

The warmer weather has put me in the mind frame of thinking about summer vacation and we decided to use some summer hazards as part of this newsletter. As I've always been terrified of getting stung by a jellyfish and didn't really know how to respond if it did happen, I thought I'd do a little research on that topic. Only problem is, I kept finding conflicting information about the best treatment for jellyfish stings. So I've tried to compile the best information I could find from reputable sources such as the CDC and Mayo Clinic but please do not use this as the definitive treatment. If you have something that works for you, go with what you know. I hope I never have to test this information to see if it is truly accurate but I will pack a plastic bottle of vinegar to take with me to the beach – just in case.

Also notice the schedule of training classes listed on Page 4. A couple of dates have changed due to conflicts. County employees should contact Risk Management if you are interested in attending any of these courses.

*Darlene*

## Summertime Hazards

### Jellyfish Stings

Jellyfish are free-swimming, non-aggressive, gelatinous marine animals surrounded by tentacles which are covered with nematocysts (stingers) that are filled with venom. Jellyfish stings can range from mildly painful to severe or rarely even life-threatening. Although some stings may require medical treatment, most will improve with home remedies.

#### Symptoms

Symptoms include an intense, stinging pain, itching, rash, and raised welts. The progressive effects of a jellyfish sting may include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, lymph node swelling, abdominal pain, numbness / tingling, and muscle spasms. Severe reactions can cause difficulty breathing, coma, and death. A sting from a box jellyfish or other venomous types of jellyfish can cause death in minutes.

#### Treatment

**Seek emergency treatment if:** You know the sting is from a Box Jellyfish or other venomous type. Also if stings cover large areas of skin or you have symptoms of a severe reaction, such as tightening of the airways or throat, difficulty breathing, feeling weak or feeling sick.

For other jellyfish stings:

**Deactivate the stingers:** Do not rub the area. Generally, wash off any remaining tentacles with large amounts of seawater although a stubborn few may require use of tweezers, a stick or other device to dislodge them. Use gloves or any other barrier that you have available so that you don't get stung too.

Then rinse the area with vinegar to neutralize any stingers left on the skin. **Do not** shower or use fresh water, rubbing alcohol, bleach or ammonia as this will cause more stings to occur.

**Remove any remaining stingers:** Apply shaving cream or a paste made with seawater and baking soda or talcum powder. Let it dry and then scrape off using a safety razor or edge of a credit card. This will remove any remaining stingers.

**Relieving pain:** Once all stingers are removed, immerse the affected body part in hot water for 20 minutes. Use water as hot as you can safely tolerate but not hot enough to burn. Ice packs and over the counter skin creams can also help with the pain and itching. Additionally, pain relievers such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Motrin) or Aleve may be taken according to package directions.

Medical help may be necessary if the victim is allergic, the pain is severe or complications from the sting develop.

### Danger of Sun Poisoning

Now that summer is here, the poison center reminds you to be on the lookout for seasonal poisonings. It is easy to underestimate how powerful the sun's rays are and the dangers that exist from overexposure. If you are a sun worshiper you probably think that having a tan makes you look healthier. But be aware of the long-term damages like premature aging and cancer. Additionally, some people are more sensitive to sunlight than others and develop an allergic reaction from exposure to the sun. This reaction is commonly referred to as "Sun Poisoning".

Sun poisoning symptoms develop on the skin within a few hours to a few days after sun exposure, lasts up to two weeks, and could include: a rash, red and warm that can become scaly small reddish pimples, "hives" or blisters, fever, fatigue or dizziness.

Skin reactions are more likely if you have a pre-existing condition or take certain medicines that increase photosensitivity (reaction to ultraviolet light). These include some antibiotics, diuretics and oral contraceptives. Many topical drugs, chemicals and cosmetics including lipstick, perfume and soaps, can also cause a photosensitive reaction. You can reduce the likelihood of these skin reactions by checking the medications and cosmetics that you use, and by protecting your skin from UV damage.

#### Treatment

Medications are available over-the-counter and with a prescription. Antihistamine or hydrocortisone have proven to be effective in reducing the swelling and itching. However be aware that hydrocortisone is a steroid and large or extended doses can cause unwanted side effects. You should always consult with your doctor before taking any medications.

#### Risk Factors

• Once you've developed sun poisoning, there is a greater risk of recurrence of the rash and other symptoms when exposed to the sun--**even for short periods**-- especially in spring and summer.

#### How to Protect Yourself

- Limit your time in the sun
- Avoid the sun, during 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. when the sun's rays are the strongest
- Wear protective clothing such as a hat and sunglasses
- Check your skin every month for signs of skin damage
- Use sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher. Don't forget to reapply throughout the day, especially after swimming or other water activities.

## Policy Highlight

### Combined Policy Handbook / Health and Safety Section

#### Policy Number 508.1 / Vehicle Safety / General Policy, Page 5

- 10) The vehicle is never to be left unattended with the motor running (excluding emergency type vehicle). Drivers will not go further than 20 feet from any point of the vehicle while it is running. When parked and unattended, the vehicle will be locked.

#### Discussion points regarding this Policy:

I know summer is coming, and you hate to turn the vehicle off for just the few minutes you are going to be inspecting the job site, assessing the home, running in the store, or whatever your job requires. It only takes a few minutes for your vehicle to heat back up to an uncomfortable level and you really aren't going that far: Right? It only takes a few seconds for someone to jump in and drive off. Yes, people will steal a county vehicle. It has happened to Columbia County so don't give them an opportunity. Additionally, we've all heard stories (hopefully it hasn't happened to you) about the person who left the car running for just a minute, thinking it was in "park" turned around and saw it rolling away. Don't take a chance. Always turn off the ignition, lock and secure everything before you leave the vehicle.

#### Don't forget to be prepared!

### Roadside Emergencies

Even if you faithfully follow maintenance tips, some breakdowns are unavoidable. Do yourself a favor and save some room in your trunk for the following items. They could turn a potential trip-wrecker into nothing more than an unexpected pit stop:

Screwdrivers and wrenches of various sizes

Jumper cables

A jack and tire iron

A can of "Fix-a-Flat" for temporarily sealing and inflating a flat tire

Water for both the radiator and yourself

Emergency flares and reflectors

Gloves

Blanket and towel

Flashlight



## Up Coming Events

Each program is advertised by Risk Management and is available to employees of Columbia County Board of Commissioners and the city employees of Grovetown and Harlem. Additionally, the Defensive Driving Courses may be attended by immediate family members of employees, on a space available basis, for a nominal fee.

**Pre-registration is required.**

For additional information or to register contact Risk Management. 706-312-7475

**Safety Review Board April 15, 2010**

**Defensive Driving Course – 8 hour**  
**April 20, 2010**  
**May 25, 2010**  
**June 29, 2010**

**Defensive Driving Course – 4 hour**

**CPR/AED/First Aid June 8, 2010**

**County Office Closed: May 31, 2010**

**May 9, 2010  
 Mother's Day**



May 31, 2010  
 Memorial Day



**APRIL 2010**

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**MAY 2010**

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**JUNE 2010**

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**Fathers' Day  
 June 20, 2010**

