

# Protect Outdoor Workers from Insects



In the summer, you must protect workers who work outside from not only heat stress but also various insects that can bite and spread diseases, such as Lyme disease and West Nile Virus.

## **Ticks & Lyme Disease**

Lyme disease is caused by a bacterium that's transmitted by the bite of an infected blacklegged tick (also called a deer tick) or western blacklegged tick. These ticks are very hard to see.

The first sign of Lyme disease is usually a circular rash that looks like a bull's eye. This rash occurs in about 70-80% of infected people. We have additional information on the other symptoms of this disease and the workers

most vulnerable to it.

According to a recent hazard alert from Ontario's Ministry of Labour, employers should ensure that workers do the following to avoid tick bites:

- Wear light-coloured clothing to help find ticks more easily.
- Wear long sleeve shirts and long pants (tucked into socks), a hat, closed footwear and socks.
- Use a bug (tick) repellent that contains 20 to 30% DEET.
- Avoid bushy areas and long grass if possible.
- Immediately after outdoor work, do a total body inspection for ticks.
- Shower soon after being outdoors.
- Check any equipment or gear that they may have brought in with them from outside for ticks.
- Report any ticks they find so that other workers can be made aware of the hazard and recheck themselves for ticks.

### **Mosquitoes & West Nile Virus**

West Nile Virus is mainly transmitted to people through the bite of a mosquito that has become infected by feeding on the blood of birds carrying the virus.

Most people who are infected don't have symptoms; approximately 20% will develop noticeable symptoms and have West Nile Non-Neurological Syndrome. This syndrome can start out as a flu-like illness with symptoms including headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, skin rash and swollen lymph glands. These symptoms usually resolve within 3 to 6 days.

A very small percentage of those infected will develop West-Nile Neurological Syndrome, a severe infection that can include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness and paralysis.

A bulletin from Alberta on West Nile and workers recommends that employers:

- Develop a plan to protect outside workers from being bitten by infected mosquitoes.
- Schedule work at times and in areas where mosquitoes are least active.
- Require workers to wear light coloured, long-sleeved shirts; long trousers; socks and high boots.
- Require workers to use insect repellent containing DEET
- Eliminate sources of standing water in which mosquitoes can breed.