

Bees in Hesperia

What many residents are not aware of is if your visitors are a swarm of bees, the fire department is not the appropriate agency to call, unless someone has been bitten or becomes ill from being stung."

Due to fears regarding "killer bees" or Africanized honeybee, residents are calling authorities whenever they find a hive or swarm in their yards. While caution is justified, since African honeybees have been found in the desert area, their reputation as "killers" is greatly exaggerated. African bees are mostly a danger to people or residents who provoke them and/or were unable to get away. However, Africanized bees do not roam in giant swarms looking for victims to attack. Like most animals, these bees react defensively only when they feel threatened. The African bee is a new insect nuisance, but a controllable one.

So if you have bees, whom should you call? The best person to call would be a beekeeper as they are the most knowledgeable in handling the bees. However, if the bees are nesting in your home or a structure on your property, you can call an exterminator. According to one local agency, bees' nesting in a structure on your property, constitutes a pest problem and is easily handled.

According to Texas A&M University Agricultural newsletter, Africanized bees will nest almost anywhere around your home, even inside a meter box or in a rain spout. It is important to be on the lookout for bees around your home and yard, as well as in barns and pens where animal are confined. When participating in outdoor activities the following points can help you avoid unknowingly disturbing a hive:



- When participating in recreational activities, watch for numbers of bees flying around the vicinity and listen for buzzing sounds. If you encounter either, leave the area immediately.
- When picking out a picnic site or setting up camp, first scout the area for bees. Never let young children play in an area you have not checked for bees.
- Never climb into a hunting blind without checking for bees and beehives first. Watch for bees flying in or out of the blind.
- When hiking, listen and watch for bees. Never step on or turn over logs or rocks where bees may be nesting.
- When activities take you into outdoor areas where bees may be nesting, have an escape plan.

Should a bee, or bees sting you, it is important to remember the following:

- Everybody reacts in some way to stings. Most swell around the stung area. That is not the same as a systemic allergy.
- Less than 1 percent of the population has a systemic allergy to bee stings.
- Symptoms of a systemic allergy, obvious within 20 minutes of the sting, may include swelling of the tongue or throat, hives, dizziness or difficulty with breathing, loss of consciousness.
- For a normal, healthy person to receive a deadly dose of bee venom, it would take about 10 stings for each pound of body weight, or 1,500 stings at once for a 150-pound person.
- Because such a small percentage of the population is allergic, doctors do not recommend that everyone have an allergy test, but you can if you want to make sure.
- A honeybee only stings once, and then it dies.
- Honeybees are attracted to hair and dark colors.
- Regular honeybees will chase you about half the length of a football field. Africanized honeybees may pursue you three times that far.

Venom content is the same in all honeybees, but the Africanized honeybees have about 27 percent less than European honeybees. It is also important to remember that if you are stung, and your not allergic, remove the stinger quickly in a sideways motion with a fingernail, knife blade, credit card or similar material. Applying an ice pack may reduce swelling and a sting-kill ointment may reduce pain. Do not cut the skin, try to suck venom out or use a meat tenderizer on the wound. These can lead to infection.