

Texas is home to many poisonous plants and insects. Some are a mere nuisance, but others can cause severe reactions or even death. Member entity employees should be able to identify these hazards, and supervisors and coworkers should be made aware of those with allergies to ensure appropriate prevention and treatment. In one tragic situation, a Member's parks department employee was mowing, unaware of a massive beehive in a tree above him. He was swarmed by the bees and ultimately passed away from the stings. The information below will help Members identify and avoid contact with harmful plants and insects.

**1**

**Common Poisonous Plants.** Poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac contain urushiol oil, which can transfer to skin, clothing, and equipment and trigger allergic reactions. The oil remains active even during dormant seasons and can spread when plants are cut, pulled, or burned. Avoid direct contact, and treat contaminated clothing or tools promptly.



**2**

**Flying Insects.** Bees, wasps, hornets, yellowjackets, and mosquitos are often found in brush piles, trees, meter boxes, and vacant structures. Most stings are not life-threatening unless the individual has an allergy, but mosquito bites can transmit diseases such as West Nile Virus or Zika.

**3**

**Crawling Insects.** Black widow and, brown recluse spiders, scorpions, fire ants, fleas, and ticks are commonly found in dark, damp, or wooded areas such as vaults, meter boxes, logs, and brush. While many are not dangerous unless a person is allergic, black widow and brown recluse bites are highly toxic and require medical evaluation.



**4**

**Exposure Control.** Train employees to identify and avoid hazardous plants and insects before work begins. Use barrier creams, wear long sleeves and gloves in high-risk areas, and clean clothing and equipment after exposure, preferably with cold water.



**5**

**Job Site Awareness and Planning.** Before starting work, assess the area for these common insects activity and plants mentioned above. Talk through the potential hazards during tailgate or safety meetings so crews know what to expect and how to respond.

#### LEARN MORE WITH THESE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- TDI [Poison Ivy, Oak & Sumac Fact Sheet](#)
- Texas Health and Human Services [Zoonosis Control Branch](#)
- Texas Poison Center Network [Poisonous Plants – Guide to Prevention and Treatment](#)
- [Training Video Now](#) – Streaming platform for safety videos