



## 003: Allergic Reactions

### *Why this topic is important:*

Allergies are becoming increasingly common, due to changes in our environment. Severe reactions may cause death or disfigurement.

### *Types of allergens*

- Medication, food and other ingested items.
- Chemical exposure, airborne contaminants, perfumes, cigarette smoke, and other man-made sources.
- Insect bites, plant oils, animal dander, mold, dust, pollen, and other natural sources.

### *Types of reactions*

Skin blotches, swollen eyes, swelling in the face or neck, swelling in extremities.

Wheezing, coughing, congestion—think of sinus issues.

Difficulty breathing. Gasping, clutching at chest or throat. This indicates respiratory distress. Inhalation of burning poison oak can cause this, as can inhalation of anything else a person might be allergic to. Even a bee sting can cause this.

### *Mild attacks and seasonal allergies*

People with seasonal allergies typically do not need assistance. However, conditions can push their allergies to extremes.

Most folks self-treat with over the counter medications. If a co-worker is taking something, ask your coworker to verify it is a non-drowsy medication.

A mild allergic reaction, such as a sneezing fit that passes, is not reason for concern unless it recurs. If it does, work with your foreman to possibly remove the allergen.

### *Serious attacks*

Noticeable swelling or rash will require immediate treatment. You have no idea how far the condition will go before disabling or killing your coworker. Do not accept “it’s nothing” for an answer. See your foreman for assistance, if need be.

Call for help and activate the Emergency Medical System.

If strong fumes or other signs of allergens are present, move the victim from the area.

Stay with the victim at all times and monitor for breathing problems.

Do not let the victim wash with hot water, which opens the pores. Don’t let the victim splash his/her face with water, or touch his/her face or eyes with the hands.

If the victim has a skin rash and needs to make a nature call, supply the victim with vinyl gloves to avoid contaminating the genitals.

Do not let the victim lie down. The reaction may be spreading to the airway.

Ask the victim questions, based on the acronym **AMPLE**:

### *Discussion leader duties for this session:*

Try to identify allergens on your job site.

### *What this Safety Talk covers:*

How to handle allergic reactions.

### *Discussion notes :*

