INSECT STINGS

(Editors note: This is another of a series of several articles by Vernon Brou on health and collecting hazards.)

Insect stings are painful, but rarely dangerous. However, in the United States, insects cause more deaths than snakes.

Insect sting deaths are usually due to allergic reactions. Individuals with a potentially life threatening insect sting should be desensitized against hymenoptera. Most Hymenoptera species have common antigens in their venom.

For non-allergic individuals, cold compresses, aspirin, and diphenhydramine (Benadryl) are helpful.

Bee venom can cause severe exaggerated reactions. It can destroy nerve tissue and liberate hemoglobin from the red blood cells. After an initial sting, a sensitive individual becomes hyper susceptible to a subsequent sting. In severe cases, epinephrine aerosol inhalers, and benadryl are helpful, but have no immediate effect.