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FIRST OF ALL


1. Learn all you can about snakes. Visit www.africansnakebiteinstitute.com.
2. Leave snakes alone and treat them with respect at all times.
3. Do not handle even small snakes. Young venomous snakes are just as dangerous as the adults.
4. Never tamper with a seemingly dead snake, as many have the nasty habit of playing dead when scared or threatened, only to strike out the moment an opportunity arises.
5. Wear boots and thick overalls or jeans if you spend a great deal on site with snakes.
6. Step onto logs and rocks and never over them. Snakes often sun themselves while partially concealed under a log or rock.
7. Never put your hands in out-of- sight places. Snakes are known to hide and will certainly bite if a hand suddenly appears close by.
8. Never walk barefoot or without a torch at night when camping or visiting facilities in the bush. Many snakes are active after sunset, and slow-moving snakes like the Puff Adder are easily trodden on.
9. Do not try to kill or catch a snake if you come across one. Throwing rocks or shooting at a snake is looking for trouble. Also do not attempt to catch a snake with braai tongs or pin it and grab it behind the head. Some snakes, such as the Stiletto Snake, cannot be held safely behind the head and you will certainly get bitten if you try.
10. In case of a snakebite emergency, do not attempt to catch or kill the snake - rather take a photograph from a safe distance, to assist with identification.

WHEN CONFRONTING A SNAKE

1. Stand still.
2. If it is safe to do so, back away (retreat) slowly and find an alternate path.
3. Report the incident to your supervisor so that all fellow personnel can be warned of the presence of a snake in that area.
4. Do not try to kill the snake.
5. Remember that the snake is also scared of you and will only strike if threatened.
6. Remember if you have no escape route, stand still.

WHEN IDENTIFYING A SNAKE FOR THE FIRST TIME:

1. Take careful note of its general SHAPE.
2. Does it have legs or a long smooth tail? If it has legs it is not a snake. Do not kill it.
3. Is the body fat and covered with spines?
4. Note whether the head, body and tail differ in colour and pattern.
5. Look at the pictures provided on the next page from www.africansnakebiteinstitute.com and find a photograph most closely resembling the snake you have spotted.
6. Note the HABITAT in which it is living. Are you in a semi-desert region, near a watering hole, near a river, is the animal sheltering beneath a tree or hiding in a tree?
7. Observe the BEHAVIOUR of the snake. Did it slither up a tree or into a hole in the ground?

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DANGEROUS SNAKES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Southern Africa has one hundred and seventy three different types of snakes. Seventy two are not venomous, while twenty nine can inflict rather painful bites. Twenty species are considered potentially deadly.





VERY DANGEROUS

Black Mamba
(Dendroaspis polylepis)




VERY DANGEROUS

Green Mamba
(Dendroaspis angusticeps)




VERY DANGEROUS

Southern Twig Snake
(Thelotornis capensis capensis)



VERY DANGEROUS

Cape Cobra
(Naja nivea)



VERY DANGEROUS

Common Boomslang - male
(Dispholidus typus viridis)




VERY DANGEROUS

Common Boomslang - female
(Dispholidus typus viridis)



DANGEROUS

Bibron's Stiletto Snake
(Atractaspis bibronii)




VERY DANGEROUS

Black-necked Spitting Cobra
(Naja nigricollis)




VERY DANGEROUS

Black Spitting Cobra
(Naja nigricincta woodi) Photo Marius Burger




VERY DANGEROUS

Snouted Cobra
(Naja annulifera)




VERY DANGEROUS

Mozambique Spitting Cobra
(Naja mossambica)




VERY DANGEROUS

Forest Cobra
(Naja subfulva)



VERY DANGEROUS

Rinkhals
(Hemachatus haemachatus)




VERY DANGEROUS

Zebra Cobra
(Naja nigricincta nigricincta)



VERY DANGEROUS

Puff Adder
(Bitis arietans arietans)



VERY DANGEROUS

Gaboon Adder
(Bitis gabonica)

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JOHAN MARAIS is the author of various books on reptiles including the best-seller *A Complete Guide to Snakes of Southern Africa*. He is a popular public speaker and offers a variety of courses including **Snake Awareness**, **Scorpion Awareness** and **Venomous Snake Handling**. Johan is accredited by the International Society of Zoological Sciences (ISZS) and is a Field Guides Association of Southern Africa (FGASA) and Travel Doctor-approved service provider. His courses are also accredited by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA).




EMERGENCY PROTOCOL

IN THE EVENT OF A SNAKE BITE


- 1 Keep the victim calm, immobilized and transport the victim to the closest hospital **without delay**.
- 2 If the victim stops breathing, resort to artificial respiration or make use of a Bag Valve Mask.
- 3 Call the Poison Information Centre help-line for further advice: 0861 555 777.

DO NOT

- ... apply a tourniquet.
- ... cut and suck the wound.
- ... use ice or very hot water.
- ... give the victim alcohol.
- ... apply electric shock.
- ... inject antivenom randomly.

Antivenom (if required) must be administered by a doctor in a hospital environment.

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SNAKE BITES

1. Snake bites do occur, although rarely.
2. Serious bites do however require treatment with ANTIVENOM.
3. Cutting or sucking at a snakebite site or applying a too-tight tourniquet does not work and, in fact, may cause further damage. Let the trained First Aiders apply first aid.
4. It is best advised to:
 - 4.1 Keep the victim calm.
 - 4.2 Keep the victim still.
 - 4.3 If it is safe to do so, take a picture of the snake and take it with you so it can be positively identified.
 - 4.4 Remember, time is of the essence. Get the victim to the nearest medical station as soon as possible.

PRESENTED BY:		DATE:	
THIS TOOLBOX TALK WAS DISCUSSED WITH:			
Name, Surname and Signature		Name, Surname and Signature	
1.		8.	
2.		9.	
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