

Mojave National Preserve Safety Circular

Africanized Honey Bees

What You Need to Know!

Attacks by Africanized Honey Bees (e.g. "killer bees") can cause severe injury or even death. Honeybee attacks are defensive, and occur when a person comes too close to a colony (or hive), which can contain literally thousands of stinging bees. Note that a few people are allergic to even a single sting from any bee – this is a special case (discussed below) that may require immediate medical response.

Avoid Attacks

1. Bee Alert! Always be aware and conscious of bees while you work.
2. Know what a colony looks and sounds like, and recognize bee habitat.
3. If you see a bee colony, move away, and warn others about it.

Allergic Reaction to Bees

Many individuals are allergic to bees, and a few individuals are severely allergic. Severely allergic people may go into anaphylactic shock after being stung and require immediate medical attention, especially if intense swelling prevents them from breathing.

If You Are Attacked

1. Leave the area immediately – run if necessary!
2. Get into a car or building. Do not get into water such as a pool because bees will wait for you to surface for air.
3. Get away from bees until they are no longer present.

If an Allergic Person is Stung

1. If a person knows they have severe allergic reactions to bees and are stung, call 911.
2. Allergic persons often carry epinephrine (an Epi-pen). You may be able to assist them in administering it.
3. If a person does not know if they are allergic and is stung, have them stop working. Monitor their reaction. If swelling is proceeding rapidly or the person has trouble breathing, call 911 and follow instructions.



Africanized Honey Bees (Cont.)

More Information

1. Wild honeybee colonies are often located in rock cracks and caliche caves, especially on the sides of washes or streams. Colonies may also occur in holes in trees or Joshua trees, buildings, and other sites.
2. While working or hiking, listen for the distinct sound of bees buzzing. Look for bees coming and going from their colony.
3. Bee attacks do not usually occur when they are foraging for water or pollen.
4. Bees will often bump into you before attacking as a warning, then some individuals will sting you. The attack will increase in intensity if you do not leave the area.
5. Bee "swarms" are groups of bees clustered on vegetation, or flying overhead. Swarms are scary, but not usually harmful if left undisturbed.
6. Death from an Africanized Bee attack results from the victim receiving hundreds of bee stings, then going into shock.
7. Africanized Bees are a hybridized version of the European Honeybee and look almost identical. The difference is that Africanized Bees tend to be more aggressive in defending their nests. Neither variety is native to the United States. Africanized Honeybees were introduced into Brazil from Africa, then moved northward to the U.S. in the 1990s. Assume all honeybees in the Park are "Africanized."

