



POISONOUS PLANTS

TOOLBOX TALK SERIES – HAZARD IDENTIFICATION

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We encounter various plants regularly, and some of them can pose serious health risks if touched or ingested. By learning to identify and avoid poisonous plants, we can protect ourselves and ensure a safer work environment.

Identifying Poisonous Plants: It's essential to be able to recognize common poisonous plants found in our parks. Some of the most common ones include:

1. **Poison Ivy:** Characterized by three shiny green leaves, poison ivy can cause a red, itchy rash upon contact with the skin.
2. **Poison Oak:** Similar in appearance to poison ivy, poison oak also has three leaves but may have rounded edges. Contact with poison oak can cause a rash and blisters.
3. **Poison Sumac:** Poison sumac typically grows in wet or swampy areas and has clusters of seven to thirteen smooth-edged leaflets. Contact with poison sumac can cause a severe rash.



Safety Precautions: To avoid exposure to poisonous plants while working in the parks, here are some safety precautions to keep in mind:

1. Learn to identify poisonous plants and familiarize yourself with their common habitats. Avoid contact with any plant if you're uncertain about its identity.
2. Wear appropriate clothing, including long sleeves, pants, and gloves, to minimize skin exposure when working in areas where poisonous plants may be present.
3. Use barrier creams or wipes designed to protect the skin from plant oils before heading out into the field.



4. Wash your hands and exposed skin thoroughly with soap and water immediately after working in areas where poisonous plants may be present. This can help remove any plant oils and reduce the risk of rash development.
5. Be mindful of pets or equipment that may come into contact with poisonous plants. Wash any pet's fur or equipment that may have been exposed to poisonous plants to prevent indirect contact.

What to Do If Exposed: Despite our best efforts, accidental exposure to poisonous plants may still occur. If you suspect you've come into contact with a poisonous plant:

1. Wash the affected area with soap and water as soon as possible to remove plant oils from the skin.
2. Avoid scratching or rubbing the rash, as this can lead to further irritation and potential infection.
3. Apply calamine lotion or hydrocortisone cream to relieve itching and discomfort.
4. If the rash is severe or spreads to a large area of the body, seek medical attention promptly.

Conclusion: Recognizing and avoiding poisonous plants is essential for maintaining a safe and healthy work environment in the parks. By learning to identify these plants, taking appropriate safety precautions, and knowing how to respond if exposure occurs, we can minimize the risk of illness or injury while carrying out our duties.

