

**Travis County Emergency Services District No. 9**  
**Westlake Fire Department**

**Standard Operating Procedure**

**Subject: Bee Swarm Response**

**Effective Date: June 15, 1997**

**Authorized By: Chief Paul Barker Revised Date: June 15, 2000**

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**I. Purpose**

To provide an emergency response guideline for dealing with incidents involving bee swarms.

**II. Policy**

1. When responding where bees are involved directly or indirectly, the mission of WFD is to rescue the individual(s) from immediate danger and provide emergency treatment.
2. WFD will respond only to life threatening situations which involve bee attacks. WFD will not respond on "pest control" calls (i.e. the killing of bees or other pests that are not posing an immediate threat to the public), unless approved by duty officer. The Austin/Travis County Health Department will handle all routine bee incidents not posing an immediate danger.

**III. Procedure**

Our response will be two-tiered, with the first due apparatus providing class "A" foam for the initial response. The attack apparatus will be backed by an ALS-equipped medical vehicle. The designated attack apparatus will be equipped with the appropriate protective gear. Our response procedures are as follows.

1. Initial Company (Attack Vehicle)
  - All personnel will suit up in the special "bee suits" or bunker gear with SCBA prior to responding. The apparatus driver will leave the hood off until arrival. This will allow maximum visibility while driving.
  - On arrival they will:
    - Use a 3% foam solution to kill any remaining bees that are swarming.
    - Assist the medical crew in the removal of any patients to a safe area.
    - Stand-by for arrival of any other responding agencies (i.e. Health Department, AEMS, or Police)
2. Medical Rescue Crew
  - All personnel will suit up in the special "bee suits" or bunker gear with SCBA prior to responding. The apparatus driver will leave the hood off until arrival. This will allow maximum visibility while driving.
  - On arrival they will:

- Commit to rescue operations and provide medical treatment in a safe area of refuge.
- Contact AEMS with patient assessment and advise where to stage.

### 3. Additional Information

- If not equipped with protective suits, personnel must wear full turnout gear with SCBA prior to leaving the station. The regulator opening in the face piece must be covered with either the hood, a dust-mask respirator from the medical kit, or by using the SCBA. Another alternative is to wear just a protective veil with turnouts.
- If responding an engine, all personnel must ride in the cab of the unit with windows rolled up. If there are not enough seat belts available in the cab, stop a safe distance (approx. ¼ mile ) from the address and then let personnel ride in the cab to the scene.
- If it is determined that it is a life-threatening situation, contact the local PD. While the officer remains inside the cab with the windows rolled up, he is to use the P.A. to advise all individuals to remain indoors.

### 4. At least two different scenarios can be expected:

- The victim(s) is found in an unprotected area and is still being attacked. In this situation, time is of the essence. Grab the victim(s) and move immediately to a protected area such as inside a structure or inside the cab of your unit. If the victim is placed in your unit, leave the area immediately and drive a safe distance from the incident (at least ½ mile).
- The victim(s) is found in a protected area, such as inside a structure, and the bees are still swarming enough to prevent access. Use a full fog pattern on a rack or booster line to knock the bees out of the air and protect advancing rescuers. This is a very effective method of dissipating a bee swarm. It is also very effective to use a 1-3% foam solution on the bees.
- First aid for victims should begin immediately by assessing the patient's ABC's and then gently scraping the stingers from the victim. To scrape the stingers away, use a credit card, drivers license, knife blade, etc. Do not attempt to pull the stingers out with your fingers or tweezers as squeezing will drive the venom into the patient. Release patient to AEMS in a secure location.

### 5. General information

- If we respond and there is no life threatening situation, the first-in company will notify dispatch to call the Austin/Travis County Health Department bee hotline and notify the residents that we do not exterminate bees unless they pose an immediate threat to safety. If it is a life threatening situation, contact Ivan Mattson personally for his records. All bee swarm attacks are kept on record with the Environmental Health Dept..
- The following numbers are for WFD use only:
  - Ivan Mattson ( Travis county bee hotline supervisor), 603-1382 or 928-8747
  - Non-emergency dispatch ( Austin 911 for add. Info.), 476-1050
- The following numbers may be released to the public:
  - Austin/Travis County Bee Hotline, 469-2040
  - Environmental Health Department, 469-2015
  - Yellow pages, "Pest Control"
  - Wildlife rescue, 472-9453
  - Kurtis Meyer (bee suits), 903-784-6145