DOAS Risk Management Services Division Loss Control Office
Contact us by email: losscontrol@doas.ga.gov or call (404) 656-6245 for additional information.

Topic of the Month…First Aid/Injury Management

The State of Georgia employees have numerous first aid level injuries daily from paper cuts to muscle strains. These injuries may or may not be reported. But the issue we are discussing today is proper treatment and management. It doesn’t make sense to let a minor injury get worse due to lack of treatment. A paper cut in an office environment typically is a minor irritation; but in a working field environment proper care is essential to prevent infection. Remember the basics to stop the bleeding: direct pressure with a clean dressing; raising the arm or leg if necessary to stop the bleeding. A simple cleaning, first aid ointment and band-aid will prevent most infections. If you have a serious injury, then you should seek professional medical treatment when necessary. If you develop a fever, or the redness around the wound starts to spread away from the wound, or the wound gets full of pus or becomes very tender and red, you probably have an infection and need to seek medical attention immediately. But, with a little effort and attention, we can keep the minor injuries just that minor when we address them quickly.

Another example is poison ivy, poison oak or poison sumac. The first step in preventing an injury is plant identification. If you go to the link, http://www.poison-ivy.org/quiz/index.htm, there is a quiz to help you identify this plant so you can prevent contact. Wear gloves and long sleeves and pants to prevent contact in infested areas. If you are exposed, rinse off the contact sight with cool water as soon as possible, usually within 30 minutes to an hour to reduce the reaction. In many cases, unless you are highly allergic, this should help. If you have a history of allergic reaction, clean off the sight area and seek proper medical attention. In most cases, cleaning and application of a lotion will keep the reaction to a minimum. Again, let’s keep a minor exposure minor if possible.

Burns are another injury that can become serious if not properly treated. Most first degree burns can be treated by immediately placing the area under cool water. Keep the area moist and covered. Most second degree burns (blisters) can be treated by covering. If the blisters are broken, a first aid ointment and covering can prevent infection. If they are larger than your hand, usually medical treatment is needed. All third degree burns (burned tissue) especially around the face and neck require immediate medical attention. Burns from chemicals, electrical burns and burns from explosions also generally need immediate medical attention.

If a bruise or sprain has caused significant swelling and pain, if you can't move the affected body part, or if a joint/bone looks misplaced, have it evaluated by a medical professional to be sure there's no break. Treat bruises and sprains with the RICE formula used for sports injuries: Rest, Ice, Compression (an Ace bandage), Elevation.

First Aid is too big of a topic to be completely covered in a bulletin. If you are interested in learning more, please go to the Red Cross website: http://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/program-highlights/cpr-first-aid or the American Heart Association website: http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/CPRAndECC/WorkplaceTraining/HeartsaverCourses/Heartsaver-First-Aid-Online-Part-1_UCM_303298_Article.jsp. There are other courses on line as well, some free, that cover many of the first aid basics. We have too many serious medical injuries. Please do not let minor injuries get worse due to lack of attention.

Thanks for your time. Let’s work together to make Georgia a safer place to work.