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Bees attack Red Lake homeowners

One person stung 10 times during attack

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Photo/Mary Kasel
High Country firefighters Lonnie Kesterson (left) and Tom Stapley prepare to enter the scene of the bee attack June 25.

RED LAKE, Ariz. - Several calls in the last month involving swarms and an attack by aggressive bees on June 25 have firefighters from High Country Fire Rescue alerting the public.

"In the last month we've had several calls for bee swarms and one swarm attacked a family as they entered their house," said Richard Nix, Public Information Officer for High Country Fire-Rescue.

The attack occurred the morning of June 25 on Liane Street in Red Lake.

"A new hive had been built, and as the owners were moving into their home, they inadvertently disturbed the hive and were chased down the street. One occupant was stung about 10 times as they ran from the swarm," said Nix.

High Country Firefighters responded to the scene and checked the sting victim for injuries or signs of illness. The victim didn't require further medical attention.

Firefighters called a beekeeper but were unable to save the hive. The homeowner was concerned that his pets were affected by the hive and their welfare was unknown because they were trapped in the house.

"We used a firefighting foam on the hive and the affected parts of the house. Anytime there is a risk of injury to animals or humans we will wet the hive down to destroy it," said Nix. "Anytime, where safety is not an issue, we will make a reasonable attempt to conserve the hive and its contents. One of our newest volunteers is a beekeeper," said Nix.

High Country would like to remind people that swarms should be dealt with by trained individuals. Most fire departments have trained people or the resources to call when dealing with bees.

"If you feel it's an emergency, call 911," said Nix.

High Country offers the following safety tips when attacked by aggressive bees:

• Run away quickly. Do not swat at the bees or flail your arms. Bees are attracted to movement and crushed bees emit a smell that will attract more bees.

• As you are running, pull your shirt over your head to protect your face. This will help keep the bees from targeting the sensitive areas around your head and eyes.

• Do not jump into water. The bees will wait for you to come up for air. If you are trapped for some reason, cover up with blankets, sleeping bags, clothes, or whatever else is immediately available.

• Once you have reached shelter or have outrun the bees, remove all stingers. When a honeybee stings, it leaves its stinger in the skin. This kills the honeybee so it can't sting again, but it also means that venom continues to enter into the wound for a short time.

• Do not pull stingers out with tweezers or your fingers. This will only squeeze more venom into the wound. Instead, scrape the stinger out sideways using your fingernail, the edge of a credit card, a dull knife blade or other straight-edged object.

• If you see someone being attacked by bees, encourage them to run away or seek shelter. Do not attempt to rescue them yourself. Call 911 to report a serious stinging attack. The emergency response personnel in your area have probably been trained to handle bee attacks.

• If you have been stung more than 15 times, or are feeling ill, or if you have any reason to believe you may be allergic to bee stings, seek medical attention immediately.

For more information go to http://highcountryfirerescue.org.

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