

TurfNet

Golf course worker hospitalized after being attacked by bees

One of the recent trends in golf has been establishing naturalized areas to promote pollinators. The benefits are numerous. They can help pollinate food sources, honey they produce can be monetized and along with naturalized areas, they quickly make any golf course more aesthetically pleasing.

Insects also can be unpredictable and dangerous, especially those loaded with stingers.



Emergency officials respond to a call of a golf course maintenance worker stung multiple times by bees. Photo by Arizona Fire and Medical Authority

That became painfully obvious recently when a man in Arizona was hospitalized after being stung numerous times at a Phoenix-area golf course.

According to Ashley Losch of the Arizona Fire and Medical Authority, the emergency agency that responded to the scene, a maintenance worker at Pebblebrook Golf Club in Sun City was hospitalized Saturday in critical condition after being stung multiple times by bees.

Losch said it was unknown how the hive, which was located in cavity in a tree, had been disturbed.

"We couldn't tell how many times he'd been stung," she said. "We later found out it was more than 2,000 times. We found that out from the hospital."

Losch did confirm Thursday that the man, whose identity was withheld in accordance with HIPPA regulations, was still intubated and in critical condition at a Sun City area hospital.

According to emergency officials, there were two workers in the area when the bees emerged. The second worker managed to flee the area and call for help.

Sun City was established in 1960 northwest of Phoenix. One of eight courses in the Sun City development, Pebblebrook was built in 1979.

According to Losch, there were two workers in the area when the bees emerged. The second worker managed to flee the area and call for help. Upon arrival, emergency officials said they were able to gain control of the situation by applying a foam retardant. They also closed the course until the situation was under control.

When co-workers approached the victim, they thought because he worked on a golf course that his face was covered with mower clippings. When they got closer they realized his face was carpeted with bees.

Losch said officials were unsure what kind of stinging insects attacked the man. The golf course had hired a beekeeper to identify the insects, but a call to the golf course Thursday by TurfNet revealed the course had not yet heard back from the beekeeper. Losch was able to confirm, however, that Africanized bees, which are much more aggressive than other types of bees, are found throughout Arizona.

"We just described them as bees because we were not sure what kind of insects they were," Losch said. "We have not heard back from the beekeeper."

To avoid being stung, the University of California Davis Department of Entomology suggests the following:

- > Don't walk in front of a hive as you're in the bees' flight pattern.
- > Wear long pants and a long-sleeved shirt.
- > Wear light-colored clothing - bees are attracted to and more likely to sting black or red objects.
- > Don't wear perfume, cologne or scented soaps.
- > Remain calm if you're stung. Don't flail your arms at the bee; movement attracts more stings.