

Work environment

– Horticulture safety package

Sap burns and allergic reactions >

This bulletin outlines some simple safety guidelines for those working in the horticultural industry and is one of a series on Horticultural Industry Safety.

Problems

While harvesting the mango, workers are exposed to the highly caustic sap that is released when the stem of the mango is removed from the fruit. Exposure to mango sap during picking, de-sapping and packing may cause:

- Acid burns
- Rhus Dermatitis (type IV hypersensitivity reaction)
- Severe allergic reaction

Symptoms include:

- Itching around the eyes
- triggering of an asthma attack
- swelling of the face
- breathing difficulties
- discolouring of the skin and
- blistering of the skin, which may cause secondary infections and possible scarring.

**Prevention**

- Wear long sleeved shirt, long pants, closed in shoes, hat and glasses.
- Introduction of good picking and de-sapping procedures
- A balance between speed and quality (If the fruit is getting sap burn, so are the workers)
- Bathe as soon as possible after finishing work
- Wash all clothing that may be contaminated with sap separately
- Remind workers of personal hygiene and ensure they wash hands and face with soap and water before eating or going to the toilet.

First aid

- Wash the effected area in soap and water
- Immediately rinse effected area in clean water
- Cover with a clean dressing and protect from further contact with sap and from the sun.
- Seek medical advice if burns do not improve after initial treatment.

NT WorkSafe >

GPO Box 1722
Darwin NT 0801

Telephone: 1800 019 115
Facsimile: (08) 8999 5141

Email: ntworksafe@nt.gov.au
Website: worksafe.nt.gov.au

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