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## Caution! Snake Season is Here

Of Colorado's 30 snake species, only three pose a threat to humans: the prairie rattlesnake, the Western rattlesnake and the massasauga rattlesnake.

Observe and share the following safety tips to better understand snake behavior:

1. Rattlesnakes like to hide. Snakes do not like to interact with humans or other animals. If the snake coils up and rattles, this is your cue to back away slowly – even backing up a few feet will put the snake at ease. Most rattlesnakes will not strike unless they feel threatened or are provoked in some way.
2. Do not touch any snake. Ever. Even though most Colorado snakes are not venomous, all snakes do have teeth and will bite.
3. Watch your feet and hands. Most people experience snake bites on the hands. Keeping your fingers and hands hidden is a good idea. Don't hike in tall grass where you cannot see where you are planting your feet. If you are on a rocky trail or an area with downed trees, be aware of what is on the other side of a rock or tree. Move slowly. Use a walking stick. Invest in a pair of snake-proof boots or high-top hiking boots to protect feet and ankles. Do not listen to music. Be aware of your surroundings, and listen for a snake's warning rattle.
4. If you are out with dogs, keep them close. Man's best friend is curious by nature. Snakes are defensive by nature. When hiking, keep dogs on a short leash. Though controversial, some veterinarians will

administer a rattlesnake vaccine. Speak to your vet for recommendations. If your dog is bitten, seek veterinary treatment immediately.

5. If you are bitten by a snake, remain calm and seek medical attention. Odds are the snake is probably not venomous. You should seek medical attention as soon as possible. Do not cut the bite open or try to suck out the venom. If you have cell phone service, call in advance so the medical facility can be prepared with the appropriate treatment.
6. We need snakes. All snakes – rattlers included – play a vital role in our ecosystems. Snakes eat rats, mice, prairie dogs, help control the insect population. Snakes are an important part of the food chain, serving as food sources for raptors and other predators. Respect snakes when you cross paths with them in the wild.

### What This Means for Counties

County employees who work on road and bridge crews and search and rescue personnel need to take extra care. Avoid or approach with caution piles of debris (eg., logs, concrete, building materials, etc...) where snakes like to hide, especially in the morning when snakes are more likely to be sunning themselves.

For more information, please contact CTSI's Loss Prevention Team at 303-861-0507.