



PALA ENVIRONMENTAL DEPARTMENT  
PALA BAND OF MISSION INDIANS  
PMB 50, 35008 Pala Temecula Road | Pala, CA 92059  
Phone 760-891-3510 | Fax 760-742-3189

## **RATTLESNAKE SAFETY**



**Why are rattlesnakes important?** Rattlesnakes and other snakes prey mainly on rodents and small animals. In southern California, many of these rodents can carry deadly diseases like hantavirus or plague or are major pests to crops.

**Are all snakes venomous?** No! On Pala, only rattlesnakes are venomous. Other snakes may bite or pretend to be dangerous, but are completely harmless. The southern pacific rattlesnake (*Crotalus oregonus helleri*) and the red diamond rattlesnake (*Crotalus ruber*) are likely the only species found on Pala.

**How do I identify a rattlesnake?** Rattlesnakes are cryptic – blend in to the surroundings – are generally nocturnal, are not usually active, and have rattles. Rattlesnakes are also heavy bodied with large heads.

**Should I kill a rattlesnake?** No! Only kill a rattlesnake as an absolute last resort. **MANY PEOPLE GET BIT WHILE TRYING TO KILL A RATTLESNAKE!** Also, dead rattlesnakes still have active venom and people have been ‘bitten’ by a dead snake. It is DANGEROUS to attack a rattlesnake. Your best option is to leave the area. If it is in your home, call a pest control specialist. They can safely handle snakes. ***The most likely person to be bitten by a rattlesnake is an adult male harassing the snake, either as a joke or trying to kill it.*** A rattlesnake does not want to bite you and allowing it to leave unharmed is always the safest option.

**How can I prevent rattlesnakes from being around my home or children?** Be sure to supervise children or animals outside. Wear heavy boots and walk on paths if hiking. Remove debris like lumber piles or trash from around your home to prevent both snakes and their prey, rodents, from nesting. You can also put up nest boxes for owls and hawks, many of whom eat rattlesnakes.

**What should I do if someone is bitten?** **CALL 911!** Keep calm. **DO NOT SUCK OUT THE VENOM OR CUT THE WOUND.** This is dangerous and does not work. Remove tight fitting clothing around the wound and elevate it. Rattlesnake bites are rarely fatal if treated quickly and many do not inject venom when biting people. Get help immediately.