



## **Bakersfield Composite Squadron #121**



## **60-Second Safety Advisor #16**

### **Black Widow Spiders**

We've all seen them, those fat little black spiders with a red hour-glass tattoo on their belly. These spiders spin tangled webs of coarse silk in dark places, usually outdoors (although they tend to come indoors in the winter). Webs are usually built near the ground; normally in trash, rubble piles, under or around houses and outbuildings such as sheds and garages. Females hang belly upward, rarely leaving the web. The female black widow is shy and nocturnal in habit. The venom of the black widow spider is 15 times as toxic as the venom of the prairie rattlesnake. However, only a minute amount of the toxin is injected with a single bite by the spider. The severity of a person's reaction to the bite depends on the area of the body bitten, amount of venom injected, depth of bite, seasonal changes and temperature.

If bitten, remain calm, collect the spider, if possible, for positive identification and get medical attention immediately. First aid is of limited help. The best thing you can do is to prevent the bite in the first place by removing trash, old boxes, piles of lumber, old rubble piles and other unwanted items from under or around houses and outbuildings. Do not go barefoot or handle firewood without gloves. Install screens on doors and windows to prevent entry. Seal or caulk cracks and crevices where spiders can enter the house. Wash off the outside of the house or building, especially around window wells and other undisturbed places where webs are built. Spiders are fragile and easily damaged, so sweeping with a stiff broom will remove webbing and usually kill them. (Use Caution.)

