

SCOPE: This procedure shall apply to companies responding to reptile calls including native and non-native/exotic species. Historically, snakes are the most common indigenous reptile encountered. However, be aware that you may encounter other types of venomous reptiles or exotic pets.

PURPOSE: To serve as a guide when responding to reptilian incidents, whether venomous, non-venomous, or exotic.

SAFETY: Proper PPE and approved containment/capture equipment will be utilized when removing and relocating reptiles. If there is any doubt, all reptiles should be considered venomous. When a reptile is under a house, in a wood pile, or any other object that keeps the snake from being readily visible, the reptile will not be sought after. Do not reach into, or through, tight confined areas.

EQUIPMENT: Minimum PPE worn while capturing any reptiles will be based on each agency's directive. This will include either approved snake chaps, duty pants, and duty boots, or turnout gear and leather gloves. Department approved snake tongs and a container such as a plastic trash receptacle, with a securable lid, will be used. A Thermal Imaging Camera (TIC) may also be utilized to locate reptiles under dim lighting conditions. Use extreme caution when operating in low light conditions, to avoid becoming a victim.

PROCEDURES

1. Locating the Reptile

- 1.1. Try to determine the area where the reptile was last seen. Use extreme caution when approaching the last known location. Be careful when walking around corners or stepping over obstacles, as the reptile may be hiding just out of your sight. Once the reptile is located, move in a slow purposeful manner to lessen any threat to yourself or the animal. When threatened, the reptile will assume a defensive posture looking for an opportunity to strike or bite. When the reptile is found, get the equipment ready for capture.

2. Capture

- 2.1. After the reptile is located, try to eliminate escape paths for the reptile. Coordination of personnel is vital throughout this procedure. Ensure you have enough room to manipulate the reptile without being too close. Have one person use the snake/reptile tongs to grab the target behind the neck. Grasp the reptile firmly with the tongs so it does not escape. Another person will position the capture container and then back away. The reptile can then be lowered to the bottom of the container. Maintain pressure on the tongs until the container lid is ready to be secured. Release the snake into the container and remove the tongs while quickly securing the lid. The farther the distance maintained from the snake means greater safety for everyone.

3. Venomous Reptiles

- 3.1. The release of native, venomous reptiles will be performed in non-populated areas. At no time will venomous reptiles be killed while in captivity. To increase the survival rate of relocated reptiles, they should be released within two blocks of the capture point. However, depending on the residential population level of the area, this may not be possible. Suggested release sites

include open fields and water drainage areas like washes. When releasing the reptile, always ensure you have a good footing and a quick exit path before opening the container.

4. Non-Venomous Reptiles

4.1. The release of a non-venomous reptiles will also take place in the general vicinity of the capture. The reptile will be removed from the house, patio, porch, pool, etc., and released outside of the common travel easements of the residential area. At no time will a non-venomous reptile be killed while in captivity. When releasing the reptile, always ensure you have a good footing and a quick exit path before opening the container.

5. Exotic Reptiles

5.1. Safety is paramount when dealing with any reptile, particularly if you encounter an unrecognizable species. Exotic species may be found after they have escaped from captivity as a pet. Some exotic reptiles are banned from importation and are illegal to possess. Any reptile thought to be non-native/exotic should be safely contained while consulting with animal control for identification and possible release. Exotic reptiles can be highly poisonous and pose a deadly threat.

6. Envenomation

6.1. In the event somebody gets bitten by a reptile, try to safely determine if the reptile is venomous. If the reptile is venomous or you are unsure, have a medic unit dispatched immediately and begin treatment per your protocol(s). Be sure to fill out the proper incident report(s) per your protocol and send it through your chain of command.