



USA: Captive and Wild Venomous Snakes Statistics – Human Fatalities

REXANO, www.REXANO.org, only used fatality numbers since all deaths are (supposed to be) reported, and there is only one degree of death. The average life expectancy of 77 years was used to calculate the lifetime odds.

Table 1: Yearly Average and Lifetime odds of Being Killed by a Captive Venomous Snake in the USA Based on 1990 – 2008 data

Number of captive venomous snakes related human fatalities in the USA: 1990 - December 2008*	16
Average Human Deaths per Year	0.88
One - Year Odds**	1 in 345,795,454
Lifetime Odds**	1 in 4,490,850

*Based on news reports, TESS, (Toxic Exposure Surveillance System) and CDC WONDER (Wide-ranging Online Data for Epidemiologic Research data)

**Based on the current US population of 304,300,000

Table 2: Captive Venomous Snake Related Human Fatalities in the USA by State: 1990 - 2008

STATE/ YEAR	AL	AZ	CA	DE	GA	KY	MD	NM	OH	PA	TN	VA	USA
2008								1					1
2006						1							1
2004									1			1	2
2003									1				1
1999		1	1	1									3
1998	1												1
1997										1			1
1995						2							2
1992		1					1						2
1991											1		1
1990					1								1
TOTAL: 1990 - 2008	1	2	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	16



Table 3: Captive Venomous Snake Related Human Fatalities in the USA by the Type of the Snake: 1990 - 2008

YEAR STATE	2008	2006	2004	2003	1999	1998	1997	1995	1992	1991	1990
AL						Religious, Rattlesnake					
AZ					Owner, Rattlesnake				Owner, Albino Rattlesnake		
CA					Owner, Gabon Viper						
DE					Owner, Diamondback Rattlesnake						
GA											Religious, rattlesnake
KY		Religious Church Ceremony, Rattlesnake						Man & woman in two church ceremonies, Rattlesnake			
MD									Owner, Black Indian Cobra		
NM	Owner, Canebrake Rattlesnake										
OH			Owner, Urutu Pit Viper	Owner, Rhinoceros Viper							
PA							Friend's Cobra				
TN										Religious, Rattlesnake	
VA			Religious, Rattlesnake								



Table 4: US Captive Venomous Snake Related Human Fatalities 1990 – 2008

YEAR/ STATE	RELATIONSHIP TO SNAKE	COMMENTS
2008 - NM	Man/owner died after being bitten on his right thumb by his Canebrake rattlesnake (<i>Crotalus horridus atricaudatus</i>) while he was home alone	Voluntarily accepted hobby/occupational hazard, no risk to uninvolved public
2006 - KY	A woman died at the hospital after being bitten by a snake during a serpent-handling service at church	Voluntarily accepted occupational, religious hazard, no public risk
2004 - OH	Woman/owner was bitten in her home by Urutu pit viper, drove herself to the hospital and later died at a hospital	Voluntarily accepted hobby/occupational hazard, no risk to uninvolved public
2004 - VA	A preacher died at home when he refused medical treatment after a rattlesnake bit him on the finger during the serpent-handling Easter service	Voluntarily accepted hobby, occupational, religious hazard, no risk to uninvolved public
2003 - OH	Man/owner was bitten at his home by an African rhino viper. The anti-venom was found/delivered too late and he died at the hospital	Voluntarily accepted hobby/occupational hazard, no risk to uninvolved public
1999 - AZ	Man/owner was bitten to death by his pet snake. He was found by family members with his rattlesnake lying on top of him	Voluntarily accepted hobby/occupational hazard, no risk to uninvolved public
1999 - CA	A zoo volunteer was found dead at home when one of her own pet venomous snakes bit her (Gabon Viper or Finch's Hog-Nosed Sand Viper)	Voluntarily accepted hobby/occupational hazard, no risk to uninvolved public
1999 - DE	The decomposed body of the man/owner was found near the open cage of a young Diamondback rattlesnake	Voluntarily accepted hobby/occupational hazard, no risk to uninvolved public
1998 - AL	A preacher, bitten more than 20 times in 18 years, died after he was bitten by a rattlesnake in an Alabama church. His wife died in August 1995 after a rattlesnake bite in Kentucky church ceremony	Voluntarily accepted hobby, occupational, religious hazard, no risk to uninvolved public
1997 - PA	A man, bitten by friend's cobra, died a few hours later. He refused to go to a hospital and went to a bar instead. Supposedly, he told the cobra's owner it was no big deal: "I'm a man, I can handle it,"	We can not legislate for or against stupidity or possible suicidal tendencies. The man refused treatment and went to a bar
1995 - KY	Preacher dies after a rattlesnake bit him on the right hand during a church service	Voluntarily accepted occupational, religious hazard, no public risk
1995 - KY	In August, a TN woman died of a rattlesnake bite received at a southeastern Kentucky church. She was pronounced dead at the hospital	Voluntarily accepted hobby, occupational, religious hazard, no risk to uninvolved public
1992 - AZ	Man/owner died after his 7-foot albino rattlesnake bit him; friends were taking photographs of him with his snake, the camera flash scared the snake	Voluntarily accepted hobby/occupational hazard, no risk to uninvolved public
1992 - MD	Man/owner was killed when his pregnant Black Indian Cobra bit him on the foot	Voluntarily accepted hobby/occupational hazard, no risk to uninvolved public
1991 - TN	A worshiper bitten by rattlesnake dies after being bitten during a church service	Voluntarily accepted occupational, religious hazard, no public risk
1990 - GA	A man, who was bitten on the jaw while handling a rattlesnake during a religious ceremony, died later at a hospital	Voluntarily accepted hobby, occupational, religious hazard, no risk to uninvolved public



Table 5: US Captive Venomous Snake Related Human Fatalities - Native versus Exotic Species: 1990 – 2008

FATALITIES	EXOTIC	NATIVE	TOTAL
COUNT	5	11	16
PERCENTAGE	31.25 %	68.75 %	100 %
AVERAGE DEATHS PER YEAR 1990-08	0.27	0.61	0.88

Between 1990- 2008, a person living in the USA was 6 (6.1) times more likely to be killed by a US native captive venomous snake than by an exotic captive venomous snake.

Table 6: US Captive Venomous Related Human Fatalities by Facility 1990 – 2008

TYPE OF FACILITY	PRIVATE PET	RELIGIOUS CEREMONY	TOTAL
NUMBER OF FATALITIES	9	7	16
PERCENTAGE	56.25 %	43.75 %	100 %

Table 7: CDC WONDER Mortality in the USA (Codes: X20 - Contact with venomous snakes and lizards): 1999-2005 - Wild and Captive, Native and Exotic Total

YEAR/STATE	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	TOTAL
ALABAMA						1		1
ARIZONA		1	1	1		1	1	5
ARANSAS		3						3
CALIFORNIA	2	1			1			4
FLORIDA	1	1					1	3
GEORGIA		2	2	2				6
LOUISIANA						1		1
MARYLAND			1					1
MISSISSIPPI		1						1
MISSOURI		1						1
NEW JERSEY	1							1
N. CAROLINA							2	2
OHIO					1	1		2
OKLAHOMA						1	1	2
PENNSYLVANIA			1					1
S. CAROLINA			1					1
TENNESSEE	1							1
TEXAS	1	1	1				2	5
VIRGINIA	1	1				1		3
TOTAL	7	12	7	3	2	6	7	44



Table 8: Wild Versus Captive Venomous Snake Related Fatalities in the USA: 1999-2005

FATALITIES	TOTAL	WILD	CAPTIVE
COUNT	44	38	6
PERCENTAGE	100 %	86.36 %	13.64 %
AVERAGE HUMAN OF DEATHS PER YEAR 1999-2005	6.29 (6.285)	5.43 (5.428)	0.86 (0.857)

Between 1999 - 2005, a person living in the USA was almost 5.5 (5.43) times more likely to be killed by wild a venomous snake than by a captive kept venomous snake.

WORLDWIDE VENOMOUS SNAKE RELATED HUMAN FATALITIES

For the worldwide venomous snake related human fatalities, which are estimated to be between 20,000 and 94,000 deaths, see:

<http://medicine.plosjournals.org/perlserv/?request=get-document&doi=10.1371/journal.pmed.0050218&ct=1>

The Global Burden of Snakebite: A Literature Analysis and Modelling Based on Regional Estimates of Envenoming and Deaths

CONCLUSION:

All fatalities happened to the owners, friends, church goers and handlers themselves who voluntarily accepted the potential risk associated with keeping and handling venomous snakes. No uninvolved member of the public was killed by a captive venomous snake in the USA at least since 1990. Captive keeping of venomous snakes might be a slight voluntarily accepted hobby/occupational/religious hazard, but it is NOT a public safety issue.

DISCLAIMER:

Due to the difficulty of tracking all the venomous snake fatalities, the actual number of human deaths might be slightly higher than reported.

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