

## Precautions taken while moving hive

By Eric Kopp

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Okeechobee News In a precautionary move, a beekeeper was called in Friday afternoon to remove two large bee hives at the cul-de-sac on S.W. Fourth Ave.

Chief Herb Smith, from the Okeechobee City Fire Department (OCFD), said he didn't think the bees were Africanized Honey Bees. But, due to the danger they present to children and residents of the neighborhood the hives were being removed and relocated.

"If we feel they're endangering the neighborhood then we'll do what's necessary," said Chief Smith. "But, for the most part, the landowner will have to deal with their own situation."

Besides a large hive hanging precariously from a tree branch, a second hive was found near the ground inside a tree trunk. Chief Smith said those bees were discovered by city employees who were working in the area.

Local beekeeper Jacob Weeks was called in and he, along with his grandson Steve Weeks Jr. -- who just happens to be a firefighter with the city fire department -- removed the hives. Jacob Weeks took the hives to his bee farm.

Lieutenant Don Hagan of the Okeechobee City Police Department (OCPD) said this was the second call in two days about bees. "A swarm moved in, and in about 24 hours was gone," he said of the first call.

The concern from citizens has been fueled by an April 9 incident where Robert E. Davis, 51, died after having an allergic reaction to being stung by Africanized Honey Bees. He was stung over 100 times.

Mr. Davis encountered the bees while working around a small trailer in the Viking subdivision on 101 Ranch Road.

Friends put Mr. Davis in their vehicle and began driving toward Raulerson Hospital. According to the 9-1-1 call received the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office (OCSO), medical personnel met the victim on U.S. 441 N. at Eagle Island Road. At that point Mr. Davis was requiring CPR. He died the next day.

Although the venom of the Africanized Honey Bee is no more toxic than that of its cousin the European Honey Bee, it is the number of stings that can have a harmful effect. The Africanized bee is much more aggressive and it's not unusual for someone to be stung several hundred times in a matter of just a few seconds.

There is no visual way to differentiate between the Africanized and European bees. The only way to tell the difference is by DNA analysis.

Following last week's stinging incident, an apiary inspector from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Division of Plant Industry (DPI) went to the site on the Viking. He was accompanied by personnel from the Okeechobee County Fire/Rescue Department. They collected 50 recently killed bees and after analysis found out that they were indeed Africanized Honey Bees.

Mr. Davis was the state's first reported fatality due to Africanized Honey Bee stings.



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This bee hive was removed from a large tree near a home on S.W. Fourth Ave. Friday afternoon. Although City Fire Chief Herb Smith didn't think the bees were Africanized Honey Bees, beekeeper Jacob Weeks was called in to remove and relocate the hive. A second hive was found nearby in a tree trunk by city workers. Helping Mr. Weeks Friday was his grandson, Steve Weeks Jr. -- who is also a firefighter with the City of Okeechobee Fire Department.