

Bumps in the Night!!!!

August 2014 Issue

Tools of the Trade

Safety First

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As a paranormal investigator many feel that “ghosts, spirits, or as I call them entities” are your great danger, and in some cases that may be true. However, in most cases it is only one of your worries. The #1 concern for all paranormal investigators on an investigation should be their own personal safety and the #2 concern should be for the safety of their team. There are so many dangers out there and taking the necessary precautions should be the top priority.

The following is a list of general safety guidelines to consider and/or follow for all investigations. This is not an all-encompassing list, but should give you an idea of things to consider.

- While it's admirable to want to be on all investigations, you should sit out investigations if you are sick, have a cold, or otherwise have a compromised immune system. Neither the team nor the clients want to get sick after the investigation.
- Make sure to drink plenty of water and/or fluids on the day of, during, and the day after the investigation. An investigation can be an emotional roller coaster, so your body will produce more cortisol, a stress hormone that causes increased heart rate and respiration, as well as weakening the immune system. When you do not drink enough water you may experience what we call a “paranormal hangover”. Drinking enough fluids should help ease this “paranormal hangover”.
- At locations you can be exposed to many things and possibly experience an injury. It is a good idea to keep your Diphtheria, Pertussis, and Tetanus (DTP) shot up-to-date.
- Make sure to wash your hands and/or use a hand sanitizer periodically, especially at really dirty/moldy locations. Taking this precaution will greatly reduce your risk of illness after you return home from an investigation.
- If you have an open sore and/or one that is already scabbed over, it is a good idea to apply an antibacterial ointment and a bandage prior to the investigation. This should help keep any other bacteria, dirt, or debris from entering the sore and help with the healing process.
- Some feel that it's a good idea to immediately remove and wash your clothes and shower after an investigation. This would especially be true for really dirty, moldy, or otherwise unclean environments. You can't be certain what fungi, virus or bacteria came home with you on your clothes/skin and you would hate to affect others in your household.
- Be cautious of the people you will be working with and for. While most clients are of sound mind and body, you will run across those that may have a mental disorder. We check out our clients prior to showing up for the client interview and we always meet them at a public location for the first time. You should NEVER go alone to someone's home or business!
- Always do a walkthrough of a new location in the daylight or with the lights on. Making sure to note any issues, tripping hazards, other safety factor such as holes in the floor, loose floorboards, missing or broken windows, etc. If possible mark off any dangerous areas before turning off the lights by stringing something visible at chest height.
- Check the area for any electrical hazards such as hanging wires, fault switches, etc. – Every year, hundreds of people are killed by electrocution. It's wise to assume all hanging and exposed wires are live until proven otherwise. Remember that metal is an excellent electrical conductor, so be careful around vents and pipes. If a live wire is touching them, then they are likely to carry a charge as well.
- Mold and Mildew are concerns that should be considered no matter how clean the location appears. Mold can be anywhere, both indoors and outdoors, but it thrives mostly in damp environments. There are thousands of types of mold and can be identified by its fuzzy appearance, which can be orange, green, black, brown, pink or purple in color. The majority of people do not experience any health issues

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from mold exposure. However, some types of mold can cause nasal stuffiness, eye irritation, throat irritation, coughing, wheezing to more serious lung infections. Even scarier than mold is mildew. Mildew comes in two types: Downy, starts as yellow spots and then the color changes to brown, and Powdery, whitish in color and looks like talcum powder. Inhaling mildew can cause many health effects, such as coughing, headache, scratchy throat and lung problems. Mildew can also start growing in lungs and cause other serious issues.

- Carbon monoxide (CO) and gas leaks are two other airborne safety concerns that can be deadly, immediately. CO is often referred to as a silent killer, because it is an odorless, colorless gas produced by gas burning systems, that can kill you if too much is breathed in. Pure natural gas is also colorless and odorless, and is composed primarily of methane. A rotten egg scent is usually added to the gas to assist in identifying leaks. Persons detecting the odor should leave the area. We use both CO and Gas detectors during baseline gathering and take readings near any gas appliances, such as stoves, furnaces, water heaters, and clothing dryers.
- If you are investigating a lot of attic and/or crawl spaces at locations beware of exposure to fiberglass insulation. Casual exposure to fiberglass is not a huge concern unless it is being moved or installed, but to safe if you are near in you should wear a N95 disposable respirator.
- All old buildings are built with materials made from asbestos. Long term exposure to asbestos can cause serious lung damage and cancers. Read our [article on asbestos](#) to learn more about the dangers.
- A lot of old buildings, and even some homes, have issues with bats or birds nesting at the location. Bats and birds, carry over 35 diseases, in the US, and over 60 diseases worldwide. Besides bacteria and viruses that they carry, their droppings grow fungus that release into the air causing fungal infections. Some of the infections can be very serious in nature. Always be sure to wear at N95 disposable respirator when investigating in areas where bats and birds have been nesting and/or are present.
- In the warmer months, or in warmer climates, make sure to beware of snakes that could be at the location. Most snake bites are harmless, but on average five people die from snake bites each year. Most snakes are non-venomous, but in the US we have a few venomous species: rattlesnakes, copperheads, cottonmouths/water moccasins, and coral snakes. Beware that even non-venomous snake bites can cause a reaction if the person bit is allergic to the snake's bite and will need medical attention.
- It is funny how most paranormal investigator aren't scared of an old, rundown building, but they are scared of little bitty spider. Maybe that is because there are way more of them than us. There are over 3,500 types of spiders and all spiders are venomous; however, most generally only cause a mild irritation when they bite. There are two types that have the potential to inflict a single fatal bite: Widows (black, brown and red) and Brown Recluse. Another type to watch out for is the Hobo Spider; while not typically fatal to humans, but can cause prolonged systemic effects that can lead to death if untreated. Even if not fatal, multiple bites from any spider can cause a variety of health issues.

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- If you are doing outside investigations, or those with open air areas, be on the lookout for ticks, fleas, lice, and mosquitos. They are responsible for spreading diseases, some of which can cause lifelong illnesses.
- Other insects to beware of are bees, wasps, and hornets. A person does not need to be allergic to one of them to be seriously harmed or die from a sting(s). Disturbance of a nest can spark a violent attack and multiple stings are dangerous because a single sting by one gives off a pheromone that attracts more from their hive.
- While cute and cuddly, another area of concern in open areas are animals. All animals carry a variety of diseases, parasites, and bugs and this includes rabies. These diseases can infect an investigator, by direct or indirect exposure, and not just from being bitten. Animals to beware of are: skunks, mice, rats, chipmunks, squirrels, ground squirrels, opossums, raccoons, armadillo, beavers, gophers, prairie dogs, bats, rabbits, and stray cats or dogs.
- It is a good idea to have a very well stocked first aid kit on hand at all investigations. Some items to put in the kit are: antibiotic cream/ointment, anesthetic spray or lotion, band aids, bandages, tape, aspirin, Tylenol, ibuprofen, Benadryl, scissors, safety pins, emergency blanket, tweezers, and Vinyl or Rubber gloves. Other items to have handy: trash bags, voltage tester, and disposable N95 respirator masks.
- There have been reports of teams getting locked out of a location and/or getting equipment stolen while on a case. I recommend that each investigator keep a detail inventory of your equipment, with receipts, in your car. That way you have it in case you have to call authorities.
- Obtain medical Information from each investigator present at the location. There are forms available at www.paranormalsafety.com that will help provide a complete medical history. To protect a person's privacy you can keep these forms in sealed envelopes with instructions on when the envelope may be opened and by who if the investigator is found in an altered state.

So remember a happy investigator is a safe investigator. Happy and Safe Hunting!

NOTE: Some of the information in this article came from the *Safety Tips for Paranormal Investigators* pamphlet put out by www.paranormalsafety.com. This pamphlet was created by Elaine Davison, a paranormal investigator, under the guidance of a physician using information provided by doctors, health departments and the Center for Disease Control. We have been granted permission to use this information. To learn more go to about Paranormal Safety: <http://paranormalsafety.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/2014-Safety-Pamphlet-8x14.pdf>.

