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Bees buzzing all around you, stinging everywhere, bees crawling up your nose, getting into your mouth and swarming around your eyes and face. This is a defensive bee attack. Like locusts descending on a field of wheat to devour it, these bees descend on a perceived attacker to defend their hive. With each venom-injecting sting they sacrifice themselves to protect their queen and hive.

People, pets and livestock have been killed by Africanized (cross between African and European) honey bees seeking only to protect their hive. Bees that are on flowers collecting pollen or nectar are not usually hive defensive. What makes the Africanized bee dangerous is that it is much more protective and defensive of its hive than the European honey bee. An Africanized honey bee responds quickly to disturbances by people and animals 50 feet or more from the nest, and can sense vibrations from power equipment 100 feet or more from the nest. They will defend their hive much further than a European bee, as far as ¼ mile. And, yes, Africanized bees are in Pinellas County.

Prevent hives from forming around your house by using screening to close off vents, drains, downspouts, or other plumbing. Use caulk to seal cracks, crevices, or other voids. Foam sealant may be used for sealing cracks and holes in walls (if bees are already present in walls, they must be removed before sealing). Wood filler or concrete patching can also be used to seal crevices or voids in walls where foam or caulking is not appropriate. Duct tape can close off holes in water meter covers or other small holes.

Protect yourself by inspecting your living area and staying alert when going anywhere. Common nesting sites include empty containers, fences, lumber piles, manholes, water meters, utility infrastructures, old tires, trees, garages, sheds, walls, chimneys, crawl spaces under houses or buildings, cinder blocks, even BBQ grills. Any opening to a void can be used by these bees. Listen for buzzing and look for bees entering or leaving an area, indicating a swarm or nest. Carefully enter areas where bees might be nesting.

If you are stung by any type of bee, you need to leave the area immediately. **Run** in a straight line and take shelter in an enclosed area. Cover your nose and mouth with your shirt as you run. This restricts bee access to your airways. Some bees will probably enter the shelter with you, but not as many as will remain outside. You need to get away from the agitated bees. Furthermore, do not hide in thick underbrush or water. It may take the bees thirty minutes or longer to leave an area! If you witness an attack, do not go to the victim and try to help. It is better to stand at a safe distance and yell to the person to run from the area as quickly as possible. Call 911 if the person is unresponsive. Fenced or tethered animals are at extreme risk since they cannot get away.

To remove stingers scrape them from the skin with a blunt object such as a credit card or finger nail as soon as possible. If the stinger is not removed it will continue to inject venom. Wash the area with soap and water and apply ice to relieve pain and swelling. Seek medical treatment for allergic reactions or if there are several stings.

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Bee colonies must be removed by a professional pest control operator (<http://Afbee.com>), or bee keeper (<http://pinellasbeekeepers.org/need-bees-relocated/>). Do NOT try to do this yourself. For a list of bee removal experts or for more information contact the UF/IFAS Extension Pinellas County at 582-2100 or visit <http://pinellascountyextension.org> or

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