

THE AUSTRALIAN

First snake bite death in WA since 1998

NICOLAS PERPITCH THE AUSTRALIAN DECEMBER 02, 2010 12:00AM

A 43-YEAR-OLD man has died less than two hours after being bitten on the toe by a snake while sitting at his home computer.

Police believe it was a 30cm juvenile Tiger snake, which would be the first death of its kind in Western Australia since 1998.

Michael Thorpe was at home in Gingin, 80km north of Perth, with his six-year-old daughter on Friday night when he was bitten at about 9pm. Police said he wrapped a towel around his foot and leg and called a friend, who arrived within minutes. The friend found the snake and killed it, but Mr Thorpe's toe had by then become swollen and blue and he started having difficulty breathing.

An ambulance was called but police said by the time it had finished the 35-minute drive to Joondalup Health Campus Mr Thorpe was unconscious. He was declared dead at 10.52pm.

Gingin Police Sergeant Scott Gillis warned that any delay in calling an ambulance was dangerous. "That allowed the venom to spread more, that he didn't seek medical attention straight away." Geoff Isbister, a toxicologist and head of the Australian Snakebite Project at the Menzies School of Health Research, said the most important thing to do after a snakebite was to immediately administer CPR. "In terms of preventing deaths in Australia, a lot have occurred because people have collapsed and not received CPR," he said. But when they do, they have often survived."

NICOLAS PERPITCH