

WORKING IN BEAR COUNTRY



Working outdoors means you work alongside wildlife and should ensure your work area does not attract bears. Follow these guidelines to be safe at work and let bears stay wild.

Keep Attractants Away From Bears

- Store food, beverages, garbage, coolers, or anything with an odor inside a hard-sided building, bear-resistant container, or as a last resort, a locked vehicle.
- Do not leave any food, drinks, coolers, or garbage unattended or at the job site overnight.
- Remember that food or garbage stored in a bear-resistant container still emits an odor and is still an attractant. Removing garbage and food from the site when you are not working is best. However, if attractants must be at the site (especially unattended), using a bear-resistant container is a must. For a full list of bear-resistant containers, visit <https://igbconline.org/programs/bear-resistant-products>.

Bears Can Be Attracted to...

- Food and drinks
- Coolers and drink containers
- Garbage
- Petroleum and synthetic products (oil, gas, diesel, anti-freeze)
- Anything with an odor!

Prevent Encounters With Bears

- Stay alert and be aware of what's around you.
- Make noise and work in groups, if possible, especially in places with low visibility.
- Keep a lookout for bear sign including tracks, scat, or carcasses (foul odor or scavenger birds). If you see bear sign, be extra vigilant.
- Use extra caution when outside at dusk, dawn, or at night when bears are more active.
- Carry bear spray, keep it within reach, and know how to use it.



Keep a Clean Camp

- If you are camping or sleeping in a soft-sided structure as a part of your work, make sure bears will not be drawn to your camp.
- Secure food, garbage, and other odorous items in a certified bear-resistant container, hard-sided and locked vehicle, on a game/food pole, or hung from a tree (10 feet off the ground, 4 feet away from the tree trunk).
- Cook and keep food and other scented items far away (at least 300 feet) from your tent and sleeping area.
- Avoid placing your campsite near riparian areas or natural bear foods (like berry patches) or in areas with bear sign.
- Keep bear spray with you at all times, including in your tent at night.

BEAR SPRAY BASICS

Bear spray is a highly effective, non-lethal deterrent, as it temporarily incapacitates a bear when sprayed properly. If bears are in or near your work site, have a can on you in an easy-to-grab spot. Keep the safety lock on unless you need to discharge the spray. While outdoors, practice taking the safety off quickly so it's second nature.

Bear spray is a deterrent, not a repellent. Do not spray objects or the ground; this may actually attract bears. Make sure your bear spray is not expired.

Bear spray affects humans the same way it affects bears: it will temporarily make it difficult to see and breathe. Avoid storing bear spray in a hot vehicle or spraying it near people.

If You See or Encounter a Bear

- Stay calm. Do not run.
- Most bear encounters do not result in an attack, but have your bear spray ready.
- Stop and watch the bear's behavior. If the bear is uninterested or not approaching, move away quietly and slowly. If the bear moves towards you or shows agitated behavior (jaws clacking, huffing, head swaying), stand your ground and speak in a calm manner until it moves away or you can leave the area safely.
- Notify your supervisor.

If a Bear Charges

- Stand your ground. Remove the safety on your bear spray and hold it forward with both hands. Point the spray slightly downwards (a charging bear will be low to the ground) and when the bear is within range (25-30 feet), spray for 2-3 seconds or until the bear is affected.



- If the bear is making a defensive charge (defending cubs or food) and makes contact with you, play dead and cover your neck and head.
- If the bear follows, stalks, or approaches you without appearing to defend cubs or food, fight back in any way you can.

Never Approach or Feed a Bear

Feeding wildlife is illegal in most areas.

