

BEAR SPRAY POSITION PAPER: ESTABLISHMENT OF BEAR SPRAY GUIDELINES

The Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee produced this position paper in an effort to provide the public with recommendations on how to select an adequate bear spray. The IGBC does not promote or endorse any particular commercial product. The following are only recommendations and the IGBC does not guarantee the effectiveness of any product. However, the IGBC does recommend the use of bear spray in addition to following proper bear avoidance safety techniques. For more information on how the IGBC formulated these recommendations, please see Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Bear Spray Report (June 2008) and the "What You Should Know about Bear Spray" brochure. Both are available on <http://www.igbconline.org/index.php/safety-in-grizzly-country/bear-spray>.

The following IGBC position statement was issued on June 30, 1999 based upon extensive review of the situation and science by a panel of wildlife biologists:

Remember bear spray is not a substitute for following proper bear avoidance safety techniques.

TO SELECT A BEAR SPRAY:

- Purchase products that are clearly labeled "for deterring attacks by bears:"
- Spray concentration should be 1.0 to 2.0% capsaicin and related capsaicinoids
- Spray should be at least 225 grams or 7.9 ounces of net weight
- Spray should be derived from Oleoresin of Capsicum
- Spray should be in a shotgun-cloud pattern
- Spray should be delivered a minimum range of 25 feet
- Spray should last at least 6 seconds
- Spray should be registered by the EPA

WHEN TO USE BEAR SPRAY:

- Bear spray should be used as a deterrent only in an aggressive or attacking confrontation with a bear.
- Bear spray is only effective when used as an airborne deterrent sprayed as a cloud at an aggressive animal. It should not be applied to people, tents, packs, other equipment or surrounding area as a repellent.

HOW TO USE BEAR SPRAY:

Each person should carry a can of bear spray when working or recreating in bear habitat. Spray should be carried in a quick, accessible fashion such as in a hip or chest holster. In your tent, keep bear spray readily available next to your flashlight. You should also keep a can available in your cooking area. Spray should be tested once a year. Do not test spray in or near camping area. Be sure to check the expiration date on your can of bear spray.

- Remove safety clip
- Aim slightly down and towards the approaching bear. If necessary, adjust for cross wind.
- Spray a brief shot when the bear is about 50 feet away.
- Spray again if the bear continues to approach.

Once the animal has retreated or is busy cleaning itself, leave the area as quickly as possible (don't run) or go to an immediate area of safety, such as a car, tree, or building. Do not chase or pursue the animal.

No deterrent is 100% effective, but compared to all others, including firearms, bear spray has demonstrated the most success in fending off threatening and attacking bears and preventing injury to the person and animal involved. The proper use of bear spray will reduce the number of grizzly bears killed in self-defense, reduce human injuries caused by bears, and help promote the recovery and survival of the grizzly bear.