



IGBC Bear Safety Messages

UNIVERSAL MESSAGES:

1. Bears can be anywhere (assume their presence).
2. Keep food and other attractants away from bears.
3. Be prepared to handle bear encounters.
4. Preventing a conflict is easier than resolving a conflict.

SPECIFIC MESSAGES:

**These messages should be included in messaging for most audiences.*

Bears can be anywhere (assume their presence).

Avoiding conflict is easier than dealing with a conflict.

- Stay alert and use all your sense to detect bear activity, especially where visibility or hearing is limited (woods, bushy areas, streams).
- Travel in a group. Groups of people are usually noisier and less likely to surprise bears. Don't let your group get spread out. Stay in close proximity of each other so everyone is visible and can gather even closer together if a bear is encountered.
- Make noise by talking, singing or clapping. This may not be necessary continuously but is critical when visibility and hearing are limited. Do not scream or shriek, as this may startle or confuse a bear.
- Carry bear spray close in an accessible place and know how to use it.
- Avoid traveling at night, dawn, or dusk.
- Avoid carcass sites and evidence of carcasses (such as groups of scavenger birds).
- Anyone moving quickly (i.e. mountain biker, trail runner) is at a higher risk of surprising a bear.

Keep food and other attractants away from bears.

- Bears are curious and food driven.
- Feeding bears puts people and bears at risk.
- Securing food and garbage means keeping it in an approved bear resistant container (locked car, bear box, bear resistant garbage can, etc.) See <http://igbconline.org/certified-products-list/> for list of approved products.

Be prepared to handle a bear encounter.

- In any bear encounter, your behavior matters. Bears respond to your actions. Both grizzly bears and black bears pose a risk. The bear's behavior should determine your response.
 - During an encounter with a bear:
 - Never run away. You cannot outrun a bear. Running may trigger a bear to chase.
 - Never approach a bear.
 - Different situations call for different responses:
 - If you see a bear at a distance, the bear appears unaware of you and you can move away undetected, do so quietly when the bear is not looking toward you.
 - If you cannot avoid a bear that sees you, stand your ground and watch its behavior. Move away when it “disengages” or becomes uninterested in you.
1. If a bear is not actively engaged with you (looking away, ignoring you, running away, or retreating):
 - Give the bear space by backing away slowly from the bear and going in the opposite direction of the bear.
 2. If a bear shows agitated/defensive behavior (huffing, jaws clacking, head swaying back and forth, bellowing, swatting the ground, hopping forward, and/or drooling):
 - Stand your ground, prepare your bear spray, or discharge your bear spray if the bear is within range, and speak in a calm manner until the bear moves off.
 3. If a bear charges, or appears ready to charge:
 - Stand your ground.
 - If it charges, use your bear spray.
 - If the defensive bear is going to make contact with you, go face down on the ground, cover your neck and head as much as possible, and deploy your bear spray in the bear's face. If you are unsure of the species, but you recognize it is defensive, play dead. Never play dead in an encounter with a black bear.
 4. If a bear shows predatory/curious behaviors (follows you, or slowly, purposefully or methodically approaches you):
 - Stand your ground.
 - Get aggressive: wave your arms and shout vigorously.
 - Get spray out and ready.
 - Fight back if it makes contact.
 5. If a bear enters or reaches into your tent:
 - Use your bear spray.
 - Fight back.

- Why bear spray?
 - It has a high level of effectiveness.
 - For most people, it's easy to use.
 - When rescuing a person being threatened or mauled by a bear, bear spray poses less risk of collateral damage than a firearm.

AUDIENCE SPECIFIC MESSAGES:

**Most Universal and Specific Messages also apply to Audience Specific Messages*

Campers:

- Keep food and anything with a scent out of tents.
- Dispose of garbage in provided containers; otherwise, take it with you and dispose of it properly elsewhere. Do not bury or burn garbage.
- Properly store unattended food and anything else with a scent. Food storage options are:
 - Bear boxes
 - Hard-sided vehicles (car, truck, RV). Avoid leaving attractants in vehicles for extended periods of time (backcountry trips)
 - Certified bear-resistant containers
 - Electric fencing, depending on local regulations and model or configuration of fence.

Hunters:

- Pack meat out as soon as possible.
- Avoid cutting up carcass at dusk or night.
- If you kill an animal at dusk, be prepared to cut up carcass in the dark by carrying strong headlamps. Be extra vigilant and watch for bears.
- If you must leave your animal, return to the site carefully. Leave it in an area that is easily observable from a distance.
- If possible, separate carcass and gut pile by at least 100 yards as soon as possible.

Anglers:

- Make noise when approaching streams or rivers where visibility is poor and/or rushing water makes it difficult for bears to hear you approaching.
- Carry bear spray on you, especially if you are wading or shore fishing.
- When possible, clean fish at a designated fish-cleaning station, or at home.
- Fish are attractants, store them properly.

Mountain Bikers & Trail Runners:

- Anyone traveling quickly on trails (i.e. mountain biker, trail runner) is at higher risk of surprising a bear.
- Watch for signs of bear activity and avoid riding in these areas.
- Avoid riding fast on trails that feature seasonal food sources for bears, such as berries.

- Do not run or ride while intentionally impacting your ability to hear natural noises (i.e. wearing ear buds or headphones).
- Make noise and slow down when line of sight is poor.
- Make noise and slow down when ambient sounds make it difficult to hear (i.e. wind, rushing streams).
- When possible, ride in groups and stay together.
- If you encounter a bear, stop, get off your bike, and follow bear encounter recommendations.
- Never try to outrun or outride a bear.
- Carry bear spray on your person not on your bicycle.

Landowners/Residents (Permanent & Seasonal):

- Properly store garbage in a certified bear-resistant bin or in a secured building (four walls, roof, and door with latch) at all times, until the day of disposal.
- Do not leave out pet food, bird feeders and bird seed, or livestock feed.
- Keep grills and BBQs clean of food and grease. Store in a secured building when not in use.
- Bears are attracted to fruit-bearing trees and bushes, gardens, and compost piles. Install electric fencing. Pick fruit immediately when ripe.
- Secure vulnerable livestock (i.e. chickens, goats, sheep) with an electric fence.

Agricultural (Farmers & Ranchers):

- Store and remove attractants, such as grain spills, food waste, and scented products.
- Do not leave out pet food, or livestock feed and supplements.
- There are many effective tools to reduce conflicts between humans and bears in agricultural settings, and they vary greatly from one operation to another.
- Many attractants can be secured in hard-sided buildings with four walls, a roof and locking door.
- Dispose of carcasses and afterbirth through sanitation services, inside an electrified boneyard, or by distributing away from people, buildings, and livestock. Electric fences can be placed around fresh carcasses and bone piles until they can be permanently removed.
- Install electric fences around non-removable attractants, such as birthing grounds, sheep-bedding areas, bee apiaries, compost piles, gardens, fruit trees, berry bushes, or corn fields.
- Vulnerable animals should be secured within an electric fence when unattended by people or at night. Vulnerable livestock include young, sick or injured livestock, and small livestock such as poultry, goats, sheep, or rabbits.

Methods for Securing Attractants:

- IGBC-certified bear-resistant container. See <http://igbconline.org/certified-products-list/> for list of approved products.
- Hard-sided building, shed, or barn with a locking/latching door
- Steel drum with locking lid or locked metal boxes
- Within an IGBC-certified electric fence