



Courtesy of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) which consists of representatives from the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service,

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Geological Survey, and state wildlife agencies of Idaho, Montana, Washington and Wyoming.

The Committee's purpose is to support the recovery of viable grizzly bear populations and their habitat in the lower 48 states, through interagency coordination of policy, planning, management, and research.

REMEMBER!
YOUR FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE IS STAYING BEAR AWARE.

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READINESS IN THE OUTDOORS

EVERY ADULT IN YOUR PARTY should carry his or her own canister. Surprise encounters are just that, and the person with the spray may or may not be the first on the scene.



BEAR SPRAY is a powerful weapon; treat it like a firearm. Handle it carefully and point it away from humans.

CYCLISTS should keep bear spray on their person, not on their bike.

WHEN CAMPING, keep bear spray in your tent at night.

ACCIDENTAL DISCHARGE of bear spray can ruin gear and vehicles. Store carefully, away from heat (120°F) and cold (-70°F). Never leave bear spray in a hot vehicle!

"Whether hunting or hiking, keeping my bear spray close at hand lets me focus on a great day afield—and keeps me and my family safe."

Craig Boddington, Hunting Journalist

BEFORE YOU GO

PRACTICE BEFORE YOU NEED IT

In emergencies, we respond according to our training. Keeping the safety clip on, rehearse your moves until they become second nature. Use a practice canister containing inert ingredients.

YOUR SPRAY MUST BE ACCESSIBLE

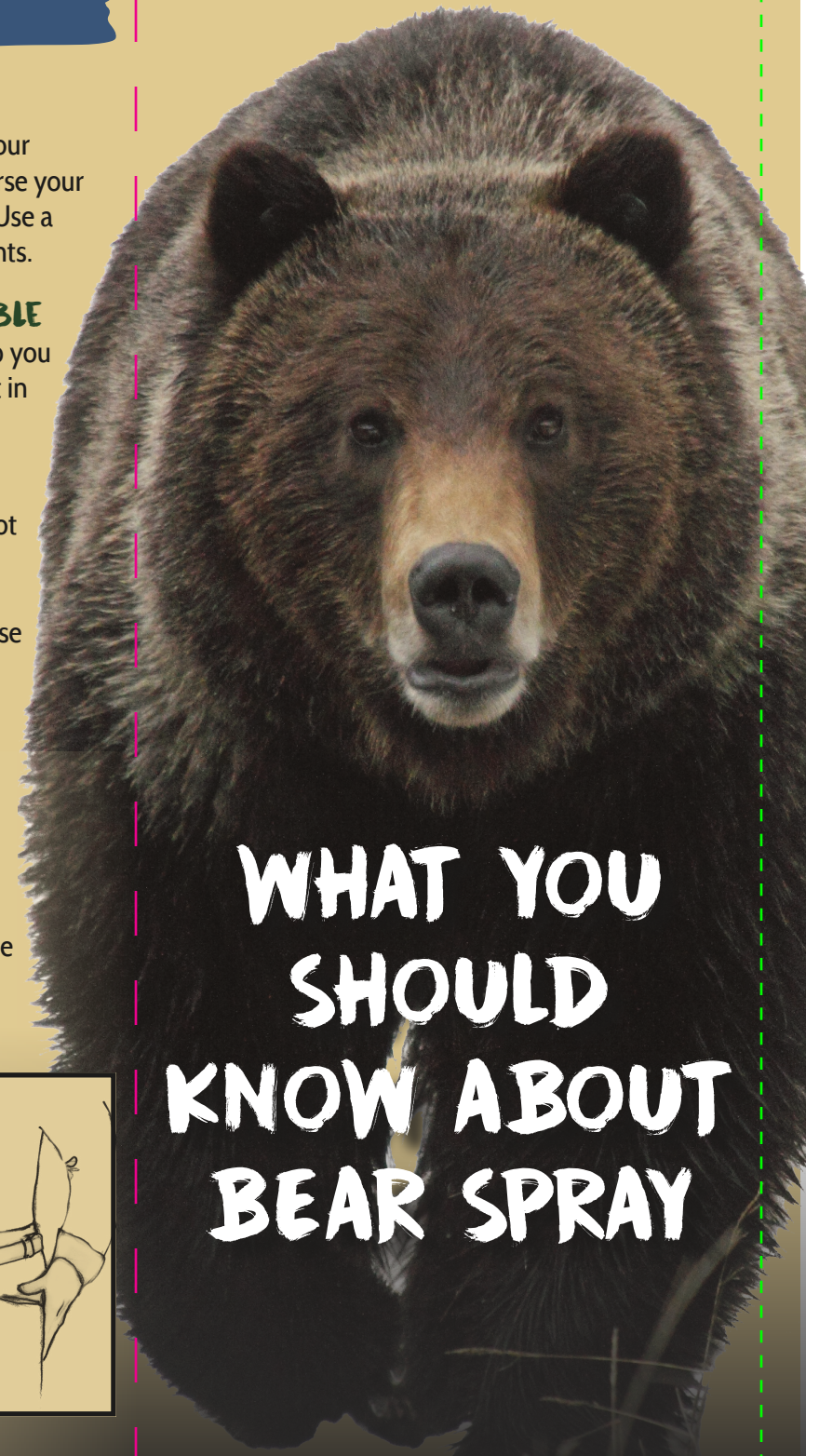
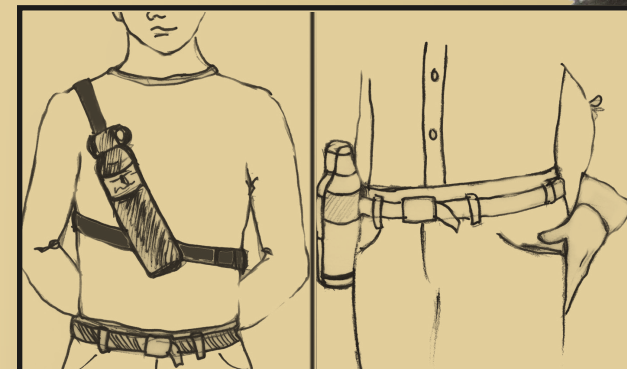
There are many products available to help you carry your spray where it's handy, and not in your pack.

DON'T FLY WITH CANISTERS

Keep in mind that airline regulations do not allow transportation of bear spray—even in checked baggage—in the amounts that canisters typically contain. Plan to purchase bear spray at your destination.

PURCHASE FRESH CANISTERS

Partly-used or expired canisters of bear spray should be disposed of or used for training. Check with your local waste authority to determine proper disposal of completely emptied and partially emptied canisters. Some parks and wildlife management agencies have canister recycling programs.



WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT BEAR SPRAY

WHAT IS BEAR SPRAY?

Bear spray is a powerful deterrent made of capsaicin (the “hot” in hot peppers), which, when used correctly, can deter bear attacks. Bear spray inflames the bear’s eyes and upper respiratory system, causing intense burning which gives you and your loved ones time to escape. Bear spray emerges from the canister at over 70 mph, so it is likely to be effective even under windy conditions.

Bear spray is a deterrent, not a repellent; use it only during an encounter with an aggressive bear. Pre-sprayed objects may actually attract bears and other wildlife.

DOES BEAR SPRAY REALLY WORK?

Yes! In a study of bear spray incidents in Alaska, spray effectively deterred undesirable behavior more than 90%.*

You must carry the spray on your person, know how to use it, and be ready at a moment’s notice.

HOW DO I BUY BEAR SPRAY?

Bear spray is available in many outdoor, hunting and sporting goods stores. You can also order it online.

Canisters labeled “pepper spray” may not have the correct concentration of ingredients. Instead, look for canisters marked “Bear Spray” or “Bear Deterrent.”

Make certain that the bear spray has an EPA registration number on its label. The EPA registration ensures that the product will perform adequately and will be effective for its intended use. Check the expiration date to be sure the ingredients have a reasonable shelf life.

*In 72 incidents involving 175 people, only three people were harmed, none seriously.

I ALREADY CARRY A GUN WHEN I HUNT. DO I STILL NEED BEAR SPRAY?

Yes! Bear spray requires less accuracy than bullets fired at a moving target, especially when you’re under stress.

Accidental discharges or badly aimed firearms can kill people, while bear spray has never caused a fatality. Bear spray leaves the bear alive, and less likely to approach humans in the future.

Firing a warning shot from a gun may not scare a bear away, but a sprayed bear is likely to leave.

HUNTERS WHO CARRY BEAR SPRAY ARE PREPARED FOR ANYTHING.

IS BEAR SPRAY DANGEROUS?

Treat bear spray exactly as you would a loaded handgun. Bear spray in your face causes involuntary eye closure and pain for up to 45 minutes. At very close range, the pressure can cause permanent eye damage. Flush eyes with water and wash away spray with soap and water.

IS BEAR SPRAY JUST FOR GRIZZLIES?

No. Any species of bear can become pushy or assertive, especially when cubs are involved or if the bear has become accustomed to human food or garbage. Bear spray may also successfully deter other wildlife such as moose and mountain lions during encounters.

MOMENT OF TRUTH

- ✓ Have the spray in your hand when you first see a bear, and be ready to use it if the bear is agitated or is approaching you.
- ✓ Stand your ground. Running away may trigger the bear’s instinct to chase.
- ✓ Remove the safety cap or clip. Hold the can up and ready. Many bears will move away when you stand your ground, and you will not have to use the spray.
- ✓ At 25-30 ft (8-10 m) or more if the bear is approaching fast, spray for 2-3 seconds. Use both hands. Aim directly in front of the bear’s head and a little downward. A cloud of hot pepper will billow up from the ground, creating a wall of spray. When the bear reaches the cloud, it will feel the spray.
- ✓ If the bear continues to approach you, spray it again.
- ✓ Try to shoot downwind if possible.
- ✓ Monitor the bear’s activities, and do not turn your back on the bear for any reason.
- ✓ When the bear retreats, continue to watch it and move away slowly.

Remember that most canisters contain less than 10 seconds of spray. Spray in short bursts as you may need to spray the bear more than once.

UNDERSTANDING BEAR BEHAVIOR

Avoid unwanted bear encounters by recognizing bear signs, understanding bear behavior, and staying “bear aware” at all times. Usually, bears are shy creatures that act aggressively only as a last resort, typically when they sense a threat to themselves, their young or a food source.

To Avoid Encounters With Defensive Bears:

- **Make noise** while hiking, especially when visibility is limited (such as in dense brush), or hearing is limited (near running water, or when the wind is in your face).
- If you do surprise a bear, **remain calm and do not run**. There is no need to spray a bear peacefully going about its business. If the bear sees you and is not approaching you, watch the bear and back away slowly. Speak in a calm voice and wave your arms so the bear can identify you as human. Take your bear spray out of its holster and have it ready in your hand.
- If the bear charges, **stand your ground** with the canister up and ready until the bear breaks off its charge. Most charges are bluffs, meant only to discourage you from approaching further. However, if the bear gets closer than 25-30 feet, use your bear spray.
- Contrary to widespread misunderstanding, **do not play dead** unless a bear actually knocks you down. However, if a calm bear deliberately approaches, stalks you, or breaks into a tent, fight back by hitting it with objects, punching or kicking.

Predatory attacks are extremely rare. However, if you think a bear is stalking you, or if it tries to enter your tent or camp, use your bear spray, make noise, and fight back. Walk away from the area as soon as you can after the sprayed bear retreats. If the bear returns to threaten you, stand your ground, spray it again, throw objects and continue to drive it off.

For more information about bear encounters and bear safety visit, www.igbconline.org.

