

BEAR SAFETY

SWP-004

1.0 Purpose

To provide workers with guidelines to store and use bear spray safely.

2.0 Guidelines

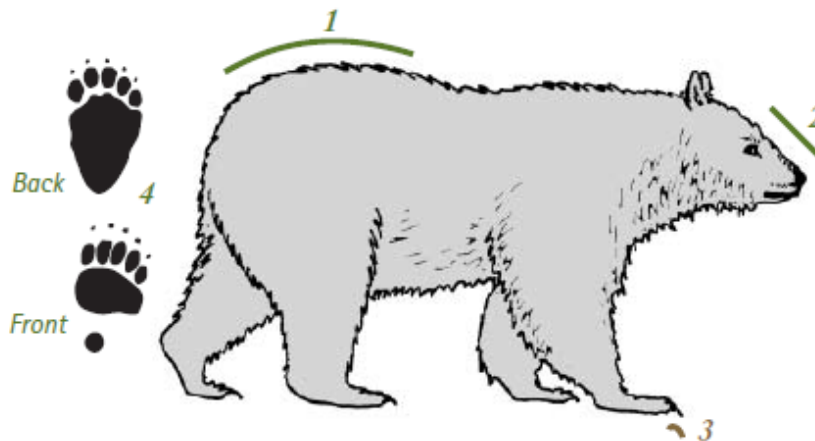
The simplest and best way to prevent human-bear encounters is not to attract bears in the first place. (Source –Guidelines for Industrial Activity in Bear Country. Yukon Environment)

2.1 While there is no guarantee that advice in this SWP will prevent you from being harmed by a bear, it can help you reduce your risks.

2.2 Yukon is bear country. When working and travelling in the Yukon, the chances are you will eventually come across a bear. If you understand bear behavior and apply a few basic principles, you can stay safe in bear country.

2.3 Is it a black bear or a grizzly bear ?

Black bear

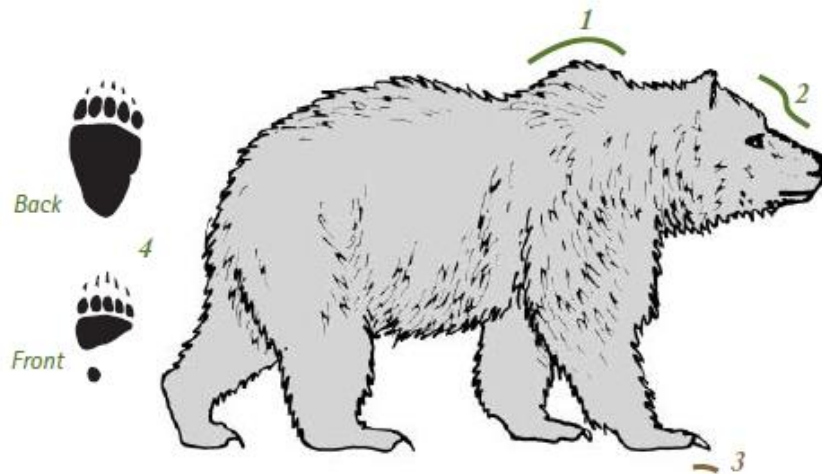


1. Highest point of back is over hind legs.
2. In profile, muzzle is straight and long.
3. Front claws are dark coloured, relatively short and well curved.
4. Tracks often do not include claw imprints. Toes imprint with space between.

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Grizzly bear



1. Highest point of back is over the shoulders.
2. In profile, brow gives face a dished or concave look.
3. Front claws are light coloured, 10 cm long or longer and slightly curved.
4. Tracks usually include claw imprints. Toes imprint very close to touching.

Source - How you can stay safe in bear country - Yukon Environment.

2.4 Before you start your trip:

- Read and understand information regarding the natural history and behaviour of bears.
- Learn how to identify signs of bear activity (scratches on trees, hair on vegetation, fresh digging, scats).
- Learn about bear safety, from this Safe Work Practice and other sources.
- Take a first aid course.
- Learn about the area you'll be traveling around.
- Try to identify/anticipate problem areas.
- Consider carrying a bear deterrent (bear spray, non-lethal projectiles, and/or noisemakers). If you do, learn how to use it.

2.5 Take these precautions:

- a) Don't surprise a bear
 - Choose travel routes with good visibility (where possible).
 - Stay alert and look ahead for bears.
 - Approach thickets from upwind if possible.
 - Make noise to let bears know you're coming.
 - Travel in groups.
 - Avoid traveling at night.
 - Avoid (if possible) work areas near wildlife trails, areas with signs of bear activity, and areas containing bear foods (see appendix A; Common Bear Foods).

- b) Don't crowd a bear
 - Don't approach a bear for a closer look or a better photo. Use binoculars or a telephoto lens.
- c) Don't attract a bear
 - Never feed a bear.
 - Avoid bring greasy or smelly foods to the work area.
 - Pack your food in airtight containers (zipper-seal bags, hard plastic boxes).
 - Remove all garbage from the work area. Even if it is bio-degradable.
 - Store petroleum products (diesel fuel, grease oil, etc.) so that a bear cannot access. Or, remove from the work area is possible.

2.5 If you see a bear:

- a) Stay calm. Stop and assess the situation. Don't run, crouch down or play dead too soon.
- b) If the bear is unaware of you:
 - Avoid it if possible. Leave the area, detour around the bear, or wait it out.
 - If you can't avoid the bear, gently alert it to your presence by moving upwind, waving your arms, and calling out in a calm voice.
- c) If the bear approaches you or you surprise it:
 - Don't run.
Talk in a calm voice.
 - Slowly back away in the direction from which you came.
 - If the bear keeps following you, stand your ground.
 - Group together to present a stronger front.
 - Remain firm but non-threatening as you give the bear time to think things over.
 - If you're carrying bear spray, get it in your hand, point the nozzle away from you, and check the wind direction to make sure the spray doesn't blow back on you.
 - Try to figure out if the bear is acting in self-defense or if it's seeking food. If it's a grizzly that you've surprised at close range, is accompanied by cubs or has a carcass near by, it's probably attacking in self defense. If it's a black bear, it's probably seeking food.

2.6 If the bear attacks:

If the bear attacks, you have two choices: play dead or fight back. The right choice depends on whether the bear is acting in self-defense or seeking food.

- a) Play dead:
 - If the bear seems to be attacking in self-defense, the best thing to do is play dead so the bear no longer feels threatened.
 - Don't play dead before the bear contacts you - especially when a bear is approaching at a distance - or you may actually encourage the bear to attack.

- Play dead by dropping to the ground, face down, knees drawn up to your chest, and hands clasped tightly over the back of your neck. Your backpack may help protect you.
- If playing dead works the bear will make brief contact with you, and then will leave when it's convinced you're not dangerous. In this case, play dead as long as possible and don't move until the bear leaves the area.

b) Fight back:

You should fight back if you are attacked by:

- any black bear,
- any grizzly that stalks, or attacks in circumstances that do not involve cubs, a carcass, or surprise at close range, or
- any bear that breaks into a tent or building.
- These bears are motivated by food seeking rather than self defense. You need to fight back with all your energy with whatever you have. Kick, punch or hit the bear with a rock, chunk of wood or whatever is handy. A bear's nose is a good place to strike.

c) Using bear spray:

- See Appendix B – Bear Spray Safety Information
- If a bear approaches slowly or follows at a distance, fire two or three short bursts of spray between you and the bear while you continue backing away. The spray will create a cloud of deterrent which may stop the bear. But make sure you have enough left to spray the bear in the face at short distance if it keeps coming.
- If a bear is charging, stand your ground, fire a couple of short bursts to create a cloud in front of you, then save remaining spray for use at close range if necessary.

3.0 Reference documents

- How you can stay safe in bear country (Yukon Government).
- Guidelines for Industrial Activity in Bear Country (Yukon Government).

Appendix A – Common Bear Foods

Roots	Plants/Flowers*		
			
Alpine sweet-vetch <i>(Hedysarum alpinum)</i>	Horsetail <i>(Equisetum arvense)</i>	Locoweed <i>(Oxytropis spp.)</i>	Bearflower <i>(Boykinia richardsonii)</i>
Berries			
			
Crowberry or mossberry <i>(Empetrum nigrum)</i>	Bog Blueberries <i>(Vaccinium uliginosum)</i>	Soapberry <i>(Shepherdia canadensis)</i>	Bearberry <i>(Arctostaphylos uva-ursi)</i>

Source - Guidelines for Industrial Activity in Bear Country – Yukon Environment

Appendix B - Bear spray safety information

Bear spray is for use in a threatening, life endangering situation to repel an aggressive bear. Use as a last resort. Bear spray can be effective when sprayed in the eyes, nose, and mouth of an aggressive bear.

Using bear spray for its unintended use may attract wild animals, not deter them.

DO NOT use bear spray on humans or domestic animals.

DIRECTIONS FOR USE

1. Place forefinger through hole in handle.
2. Place thumb in front of orange safety clip and remove it by lifting up and back.
3. Point nozzle directly towards bear's face.
4. Depress actuator tab for a burst of spray. Spray is most effective at short range.
5. Replace orange safety clip after use. This will prevent accidental discharge.



Caution - Be aware of weather conditions and avoid discharging upwind. Move away to avoid exposure to spray.

Storage & handling –

- Temperature: Store between 50°C and -15°C (122°F to 5°F). Product functions best between 0°C and 25°C.
- Product under pressure. Can be explosive when heated.
- Store cans upright, to prevent damage and leakage of the product. Storage in a container is recommended.
- Avoid storing weighted items on head of canister (nozzle), as this may damage components and cause the canister to malfunction.
- Do not store in direct sunlight or expose to flame. Contents may explode due to high heat.
- Do not store in vehicle glove compartment. Contents may explode due to high heat. Contents will react with plastic in vehicles and cause damage.
- When not in use, store in containers designed for bear spray.
- Refer to SDS for more information.

After use/personal care –

- Avoid touching face (eyes, nose, skin and mouth) after discharging bear spray.
- Wash hands and exposed skin (when safe to do so) with warm water and a gentle soap suitable for removing oily substances.
- Avoid touching other objects and transferring the residue.
- Wash contaminated objects with warm water and a gentle soap suitable for removing oily substances.
- Wash hair baby shampoo.
- Do not take internally. If ingested, do not induce vomiting. Consult a physician.
- Refer to SDS for more information.

Garment & material care –

- Clean garments with water and a gentle oil/grease removing dish soap.
- It may take several washings for the spray residue be removed from the fabric.