

Bear Spray

Bear spray is the most effective means of repelling an attacking grizzly or black bear in a non-toxic, non-lethal manner. Although common sense might suggest that guns would provide greater personal protection, research and experience indicates that human-bear encounters that do not involve firearms are less likely to result in injury to a human or bear.

According to a USFW report, law enforcement agents and experienced hunters who use firearms to defend themselves suffer injury about 50% of the time, while people defending themselves with bear spray escape injury most of the time and injuries that did occur were less severe. University of Calgary's Dr. Stephen Herrero found similar results. This is why bear spray is often carried in the backcountry by biologists, professional guides, hunters and hikers/campers.



Buying Bear Spray: Purchasing Guide

- **Strength:** spray should have a minimum concentration of 0.857% capsaicin (a red pepper derivative)
- **Container size:** spray should be at least 7.9 ounces of net weight
- **Length of spray:** spray should last at least 8 seconds
- **Range:** spray should have a range of about 16 feet
- **Type:** not all "pepper sprays" are the same: ensure that you are using a bear deterrent spray, not a personal defense product like mace - designed for use on people or dogs
- **Shelf life:** should have a shelf life of 4 years after initial purchase

How bear spray works

The aerosol can shoots bursts of atomized capsaicin up to eight yards, though the spray is most effective at short range. Bear pepper spray causes the membranes of the eyes, nose and lungs of a bear to swell and the result is a nearly total, yet temporary, loss of sight and severe restriction of breathing. To be effective, bear spray has to hit the eyes and nose of the bear. Most times, bears that are sprayed either are nearly incapacitated or leave the area, allowing you time to recede.

Bear Smart Durango
970-749-4262
bp@frontier.net
bearsmartdurango.org



BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR AND BE BEAR SMART!

How to use bear spray

Always carry bear spray so that it is readily available to you, preferably in a holster worn on a belt or chest harness. If a bear is approaching or charging you, use the spray to deter the bear.

- Remove safety clip
- Use both hands, steady your arm and depress trigger with thumb
- Deploy in 2 to 3 second bursts
- Spray directly in the bear's face
- Do not use entire contents. More than one application may be needed
- Practice using spray before needing to

Warnings

Bear spray should not be sprayed on objects such as tents or humans. This type of use has no deterrent effect on bears. In fact, some bears may be attracted to bear spray.

Wind speed and direction can affect the effectiveness of bear spray.

When transporting bear spray, always make sure the safety is securely in place.

Remember

Nothing can replace good sense and proper safety measures. People whose activities may possibly put them in a situation where they may encounter a bear or other wild animal should educate themselves and be aware of the potential for an attack. Bear spray is ideal for personal defense use when hunting, camping, fishing, hiking and biking or whenever enjoying the great outdoors in bear habitat.

Review this material before embarking into bear country. Being mentally prepared will help you should you require the use of your bear spray.

Source: Get Bear Smart Society

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