

BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR AND BE BEAR SMART!

Congratulations on your new home! In southwest Colorado we are fortunate to share the landscape with an abundance of wildlife, including elk, deer, coyotes, mountain lions... and bears. Living responsibly with bears requires taking proper measures to reduce the likelihood of human and bear conflicts.

Human and bear conflict occurs when bears find human food sources around residences and in neighborhoods. Sources include garbage, bird feeders, compost piles, pet food, livestock feed, chickens, fruit trees and more. Bears obtain a huge caloric boost from these food sources and quickly become conditioned to receiving food rewards.

In their attempts to obtain more they will break into homes, vehicles, garages, etc. Once bears become problematic there is little that can be done to change their behavior. These types of problem bears will need to be dealt with by Colorado Parks and Wildlife personnel, oftentimes lethally.

It is best to keep human foods from bears in the first place, most notably trash. La Plata County and the City of Durango have enacted ordinances that specify how trash must be handled at residences and businesses:

La Plata County

Residents are required to store trash safely in a structure, such as a garage, or in a bear-resistant trash container. Containers are to be placed curbside only on the morning of collection and no earlier than 5:30 a.m. Fines are \$200 for a first offense, \$300 for a second offense and \$500 for additional offenses. Many Homeowners' Associations have similar rules. If your HOA doesn't have rules relating to bears and trash, please talk to members about developing guidelines.

City of Durango

Residents are required to store trash safely in a structure, such as a garage, or in a bear-resistant trash container. Containers can be placed at the curbside only on the morning of pick-up, and no earlier than 6 a.m. Fines are \$100 for a first offense and \$200 for each additional offense.

Several local waste haulers provide residential bear-resistant trash containers upon request at an additional expense. Before ordering make sure that the container has been certified by the Living With Wildlife testing program as being bear-resistant.

Local Waste Haulers

City of Durango: 970-375-3504
Phoenix Recycling: 970-375-1300
WCA Transit Waste: 970-247-0646
Waste Management: 970-247-1821



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Some simple suggestions for keeping our community safe for both people and bears include:

- It is best to use a bear-resistant trash container. Otherwise, keep trash in a secure structure such as a garage or shed. Set out trash containers the morning of collection only. Keep bear-resistant trash containers closed and latched at all times other than the morning of collection.
- It is best to remove bird feeders, including hummingbird feeders, from March thru November. At the very least make feeders inaccessible to bears and clean up any fallen seed.
- Keep all bear-accessible windows and doors tightly closed, including garage doors. Consider replacing lever-style door handles with round knobs.
- Do not leave food, beverages or trash in your vehicle and keep vehicle doors locked.
- Remove fruit from the tree before it ripens. Remove fallen fruit so bears don't become used to being in yards. Use fruitglean.org for any unused fruit or locating excess fruit.
- Feed pets indoors and keep all domestic and livestock feed secured or in a bear-resistant container.
- Clean grease traps and burn off excess foods from your outdoor grill.
- Electric fencing is highly effective for county residents in protecting chickens, livestock, beehives, fruit trees, gardens and more.
- Do not allow bears to become accustomed to being in yards and around humans.

Report incidents of bears accessing trash:

Central Dispatch: 970-385-2900

Report bear sightings and incidents:

Colorado Parks and Wildlife: 970-247-0855

Bear Smart Durango (*online form*): bearsmartdurango.org

Report problematic or potentially dangerous bears:

Colorado Parks and Wildlife: 970-247-0855 or 911

