



What you should know about

Bear Spray

- ▶ **BEAR SPRAY IS A DETERRENT** made of red pepper oil (oleoresin of capsaicin). It inflames the eyes and upper respiratory system. If used properly, it can effectively deter an aggressive bear.
- ▶ **TREAT BEAR SPRAY LIKE A FIREARM.** Contents are under pressure: Spray comes out at more than 70 mph and could cause permanent eye damage.
- ▶ **DO NOT PRE-SPRAY OBJECTS.** Bear spray does not work like an insect repellent. If used this way, it may actually attract a bear because of the residue's strong odor.
- ▶ **WHEN PURCHASING,** look for canisters marked "Bear Spray" or "Bear Deterrent" with an **EPA registration**, 1-2% capsaicin and capsaicinoids, and a 25-foot (8 m) or more range.
- ▶ **KEEP SPRAY** away from heat (120°F) and cold (-7°F). In extreme heat, pressure can build until the canister explodes; in extreme cold, pressure may decrease so the canister may not spray properly.
- ▶ **KEEP IN MIND WHEN TRAVELING** that safety regulations prohibit airlines from transporting bear spray. If traveling in small planes or helicopters, be sure to inform the pilot before your departure. The pilot may allow you to store bear spray in a float or outer compartment of the aircraft.
- ▶ **WHEN CAMPING,** keep bear spray accessible at night.
- ▶ **IF YOU HAVE A PARTIALLY USED CANISTER** of bear spray or if it is beyond its **expiration date**, dispose of it or use it for training purposes. Do not rely on it as a deterrent. A completely emptied bear spray canister may be discarded as trash or it may be disposed of as hazardous waste. Check with your local waste authority.

Learn more about bears and bear safety:
alaskabears.alaska.gov



Using Bear Spray

▶ **PRACTICE USING BEAR SPRAY BEFORE YOU NEED IT.**

Rehearse preparing to deploy the bear spray, particularly removing the safety. Remove the safety clip by placing your thumb in front of the curved tip of the safety clip. Pull the clip back towards you. Practice firing with a canister containing inert ingredients.

▶ **WHEN HEADING OUT ON THE TRAIL,** be sure to cut away any zip tie or device that locks the safety in place. Retain the safety leash, so you don't lose the safety clip. Keep the safety on until just before use.

▶ **CARRY SPRAY SO IT IS SECURE BUT ACCESSIBLE.**

Do not carry it in a pack or on your bike. It needs to be on you, within immediate reach, preferably secured in a holster.



▶ **USE SPRAY TO DETER AN AGGRESSIVE BEAR.** Remove the safety clip. Depress trigger with thumb. Spray comes out in a cone-shaped fog. It should be used only at close range.

▶ **WHEN THE BEAR IS 20-30 FT (6-10 M)** away, give a 1-2 second blast. Aim slightly downward in front of the bear's head. Remember, you have only about 7-9 seconds worth of spray in a can. If the bear continues to approach, spray it again. Monitor the bear's activities and do not turn your back on the bear for any reason.

▶ **PAY ATTENTION TO WIND DIRECTION.** Try to shoot down wind. The spray's force can overcome some wind but you may be affected by even a small amount of the spray, making it difficult for you to function. Stay out of the spray!

▶ **WHEN THE BEAR RETREATS,** continue to watch it and leave the area promptly. **Do not run.** If the bear does not retreat but does stop advancing, move away slowly, always keeping an eye on the bear. Keep your spray ready in case you need to give it another blast.

▶ **BEAR SPRAY IS YOUR LAST LINE OF DEFENSE.** Bear spray is no substitute for preventative behavior and preparation. Before heading into bear country, learn about bear behavior and ways to be "bear safe." And remember, think through what you'll do in an encounter and practice using bear spray before you need it.

Learn more about bears and bear safety:
alaskabears.alaska.gov

