

## **Keeping Bears Away from Homes and Communities**

July 26, 2019

Bears that come into a populated area aren't always a threat to public safety, but safety is at risk when a bear exhibits threatening or aggressive behaviour. Below are tips to reduce your chances of attracting bears, and what to do if you encounter a bear.

### **Reduce the chances of attracting bears by:**

- Storing garbage in bear-resistant, airtight containers inside a storage area that is not accessible to bears
- Washing garbage containers and dumpsters frequently using a strong disinfectant to reduce odours
- Putting out garbage on the morning of garbage collection - not the night before
- Keeping pet food indoors
- Removing grease and food residue from barbecue grills, including the grease trap, after each use
- Putting away bird feeders until the winter months
- Turning compost regularly and keeping meat, fish or sweet foods like fruit out of your composter
- Keeping meat and fish scraps in the freezer until garbage collection day
- Picking fruits and berries from trees as they ripen and from the ground.

### **If you encounter a bear:**

- If your personal safety is at risk, call 911 or your local police
- Remain calm – often the bear is just passing through, and will move on if no food source is found
- If a bear is in a tree, leave it alone and remove other people and dogs from the area
- Keep away from the bear, and do not block its exit
- Tell others of its location and warn them to keep away, and bring children and pets indoors
- If near a building or car, get inside as a precaution
- If the bear was attracted to food or garbage, remove these items after the bear leaves to discourage the bear from returning
- Keep dogs on leash and away from bears
- If you have a problem with a bear, call the Bear Wise line toll-free at 1-866-514-2327 for advice on how to avoid human-bear encounters during bear season (April 1 to November 30).

### **If a bear approaches you:**

- Slowly back away, watching the bear
- If the bear tries to approach you, do not turn and run – make noise, throw rocks or sticks and make yourself appear as big as possible
- Carry a noise-making device such as a whistle or air horn, and use it if necessary
- If the bear continues to approach you, keep backing away slowly while acting aggressively towards the bear

- If you are carrying bear repellent, make sure you are familiar with the product and how it is used, using it only if the bear is attacking you or is extremely close to you
- Bear attacks are rare, however, if a bear does attack, do not play dead unless you are sure it is a mother bear attacking you in defence of cubs
- Fighting back is the best chance of persuading a bear to stop its attack, so use a large stick, a rock, or anything else that you can to deter the bear.

#### **QUICK FACTS:**

- If a bear poses an immediate threat to public safety by exhibiting threatening or aggressive behaviour, call 911 or your local police at 888-310-1122.
- For advice on reducing bear attractants, call the Bear Wise reporting line toll-free at 1-866-514-2327; Hearing Impaired (TTY) 1-705-945-7641. You will be connected directly with a live operator during bear season (April 1 to November 30).

#### **LEARN MORE:**

- Find out more about what to do in emergency and non-emergency situations at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/prevent-bear-encounters-bear-wise>
- Visit [ontario.ca/bearwise](https://www.ontario.ca/bearwise) for more information on bears.

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