

Important to be bear-aware in Lake Tahoe

There are an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 American black bears living in the Sierra Nevada and sharing habitat with the human population. Spring is the time of year when bears emerge from their winter dens in search of food. Bears are attracted to anything edible or scented.

Once they get access to human food and trash, bears lose their fear of humans and can cause property damage and threaten public safety. Residents and visitors can help keep our bears wild and reduce potential conflicts between bears and humans by properly storing food and trash.

The following are tips for safe-guarding dwellings against a bear encounter:

- Purchase, store all trash in, and properly close bear-resistant garbage containers.
- Freeze strong smelling left overs, such as fish, until trash day to reduce the smell.
- Wait to put trash out until the morning of collection day.
- Keep garbage cans clean and deodorize them with bleach or ammonia.
- Don't leave trash, groceries, or animal feed in your car.
- Keep barbecue grills clean and stored in a garage or shed when not in use.
- Refrain from putting out bird feeders from April through October.

- Don't leave any scented non-food products outside or in your car, such as suntan lotion, lip balm, insect repellent, toothpaste, soap or candles.
- Keep doors and windows closed and locked when the home is unoccupied.
- Consider installing motion-activated outdoor lights, sprinklers and alarms, as well as electric fencing.
- Harvest fruit off trees as soon as it is ripe, and promptly collect all fruit that falls.
- Securely block access to potential hibernation sites, such as crawl spaces under decks and buildings.
- Vegetable gardens, compost piles, orchards and chickens may attract bears. Use electric fences to keep bears out.

Tips for safe-guarding your campsite against a bear encounter:

- Never feed wildlife.
- Always store food (including pet food), drinks, toiletries, coolers, cleaned grills, cleaned dishes, cleaning products, and all other scented items as soon as possible after use in the bear-resistant containers (storage lockers) provided at your campsite.
- Clean the barbecue grill after each use and store properly.
- Always place trash in bear-resistant dumpsters in campground or in bear-resistant containers at your campsite and close and lock after each use.
- Never leave scented items unattended in your campsite, tent, or car.
- Never leave trash at your campsite.

To report bear conflicts in California, call 916.445.0380; in Nevada call at 775.688.2327.