



## News Release

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### **Bear Attack Investigation Results; Know Your Bear Spray**

(Anchorage) – Following a bear attack involving two soldiers on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), ADF&G biologists and JBER employees returned to the site of the attack and surveyed the area for wildlife activity using drones with thermal cameras. No bears or other animals were detected during the flights, and there were no signs the bear had returned to the site, which was adjacent to a bear den. ADF&G has concluded the investigation of this incident and is continuing to monitor reports of bear activity across Anchorage, including on JBER.

As part of the investigation, samples were collected and DNA analysis was performed by the ADF&G Gene Conservation Lab in Anchorage. Initial reports identified the involved animal as a brown bear; sample analysis confirmed that it was a male brown bear and results were consistent with a singular animal. The genetic results were also different from samples collected in previous investigations, including those from a similar defensive attack in 2022 by a female brown bear with cubs at a den site. Brown bears typically emerge from their dens between late March and May and disperse from these sites to begin foraging. Adult brown bears have large home ranges, which can vary widely from around 200 sq. kilometers for females to 500-600 sq. kilometers for males according to previous studies. Bears who den in one area may spend much of the year miles away from that location and may or may not use the same den area in subsequent years.

Anyone who sees a brown bear in Anchorage, or any wild animal behaving aggressively or unusually, should report it immediately using the online reporting tool at:

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=reportwildlifeencounter.main> or by calling 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Both individuals who were involved in the attack had bear spray and deployed it during the attack. Bear spray is a deterrent made of red pepper oil (oleoresin capsaicin), which inflames the eyes and upper respiratory system. When purchasing bear spray, look for canisters marked “bear spray” or “bear deterrent” with an EPA registration, a 25-foot (8m) or greater range, and at least 1-2% capsaicin and capsaicinoids with higher concentrations (2%) recommended. Unlike pepper spray designed for other uses, bear spray deploys in a wider “fog” pattern and comes in larger canisters to allow for multiple sprays and longer spray duration. It is important to rehearse using bear spray before you need it, particularly removing the safety and being sure any additional shipping zip-ties are cut away. Practice canisters with inert ingredients are available from local and online retailers. Spray should be carried in such a way that it is both secure and accessible. Expired bear spray may lose pressurization and not deploy as originally intended; check for expiration dates and replace cans as needed.

For more information from ADF&G about bear behavior and wildlife safety, including videos on what to do if you encounter a bear and bear spray demonstrations, visit:

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=livingwithbears.main>

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