



News Release

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Contact: Cynthia Wardlow,
Regional Supervisor; 907-267-2529
cynthia.wardlow@alaska.gov

Prospect Heights Bear Attack; Hiker Deployed Bear Spray

(Anchorage, Alaska) – On Thursday, August 13, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) staff responded to a reported bear attack near the Prospect Heights trailhead in Anchorage. An adult female victim was injured, while trail running alone, after encountering a brown bear on the Wolverine Bowl trail. The victim was carrying bear spray and was able to deploy it during the encounter before self-rescuing to the trailhead. She was transported to a local hospital for treatment. Biologists interviewed the victim, went to the site of the attack to look for the bear or any other signs of bear activity, and collected samples. No bears were located. 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>

Warning signs have been posted at the trailhead by ADF&G; hikers should stay off closed trails. Thick, dense summer foliage can block sightlines making surprise encounters more likely. Choose hiking routes with good visibility and away from known attractants, like salmon-bearing streams.

ADF&G recommends the following tips when hiking in bear country:

- Always carry a deterrent, including bear spray and firearms.
- Travel in groups and stay together on trails.
- Make noise so you don't surprise a bear. Stay alert and look for signs of bears.
- Never approach or crowd bears; respect their "personal space."
- Keep pets on leash when possible to avoid unwanted wildlife interactions.

If you surprise a bear, especially one with cubs or on a food cache, it may react in a threatened or defensive manner. The bear may be agitated and may huff, stomp, make a popping sound with its teeth, salivate or lay its ears back against its head and charge.

- Stay calm during a bear encounter. Ready your deterrent. Stand your ground, group up with others and alert the bear by talking calmly. Don't run.
- If the bear is stationary, move away slowly while keeping your eyes on the bear.
- If the bear starts to move toward you or charges, stop and stand your ground.
- Let the bear know you are not a threat. Behaving calmly, moving slowly, and speaking in a low calm voice will help de-escalate the situation.
- If the bear continues to approach, use your deterrent when the bear is within range.

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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