



INTERAGENCY NEWS RELEASE

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Keep Tahoe Bears Wild!

Agencies remind public to practice proper food storage, trash disposal in bear country

LAKE TAHOE, Calif./Nev. – Lake Tahoe natural resource and law enforcement agencies remind residents and visitors to practice proper food storage and trash disposal at all times while in bear country. Intentional or unintentional feeding of bears can result in unwanted bear behaviors, increased human-bear conflicts, and public safety issues, as well as fines and possible jail time for violators. Each year law enforcement and state wildlife officers respond to hundreds of calls in which bears may pose a public safety threat or are damaging property. In some cases, the bear must be euthanized. Become part of the solution and help us Keep Tahoe Bears Wild!

“Keeping Tahoe Bears Wild is a year-round commitment! We need everyone, from full-time residents to visitors passing through for a day or two, to do their part,” said Nevada Department of Wildlife Biologist, Heather Reich. “Bears belong in the Tahoe Basin. The agencies that manage the land and the wildlife, want to do all we can to ensure humans and bears enjoy the natural resources Lake Tahoe has to offer.”

The Tahoe Basin is a spectacular place to live and attracts millions of outdoor recreationists each year. The Sierra Nevada is prime bear habitat with an estimated population of 10,000 to 15,000 American black bears. With the onset of warmer weather conditions, bears are beginning to leave their winter dens in search of food. When bears emerge from hibernation, they are very hungry and must eat to make up for calories lost during winter. As more people live in and frequent bear country, an abundance of unnatural

food sources become available to bears. Bears are attracted to anything scented and/or edible. Improperly stored food and garbage are temptations few bears can resist.

Once bears gain access to human food or trash, they will continue to seek it out. They become less cautious of people and may display unusually bold behavior when trying to get to human or pet food. Bears that have become indifferent or habituated to the presence of people may 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 acting responsibly in bear country and properly storing food and trash.

At National Forest campgrounds in the Lake Tahoe Basin, visitors are required to store food in bear-resistant containers (storage lockers/bear boxes), dispose of trash in dumpsters and close and lock these containers or risk fines, jail time, or both.

California and Nevada law prohibits the feeding of any big game mammal. Proper food storage is also required by law in California State Parks. Food, beverages, scented items or ice chests left unattended may be confiscated and a citation may be issued. Visitors that violate these rules may be ejected from the park. All counties in Nevada that border Lake Tahoe have ordinances in place prohibiting residents from allowing wildlife access to garbage. Citations and fines can be issued for code violations.

The following are tips for safe-guarding homes, long-term rentals, vacation home rentals or timeshares (if permitted by the property owner):

- Never feed wildlife. This encourages unnatural and harmful foraging behavior.
- Purchase, store all trash in, and properly close bear-resistant garbage containers, preferably bear boxes. Inquire with local refuse companies about new bear box incentives and payment programs. Visit www.southtahoerefuse.com/Bear-Aware.html and/or www.ndow.org/Nevada_Wildlife/Bear_Logic/ for more information.
- Never leave groceries, animal feed, or anything scented in vehicles. Bears can open vehicle doors and they may cause damage trying to gain entrance if there are scented items inside.
- Keep barbecue grills clean and stored in a garage or shed when not in use.
- Keep doors and windows closed and locked when the home is unoccupied.
- Vegetable gardens, compost piles, orchards and chickens may attract bears. Use electric fences to keep bears out where allowed. Refrain from hanging bird feeders.
- If neighborhoods experience bear activity, consider using electric doormats and/or electric fencing on windows and/or doors where allowed. Electrified windows and doors should have signs posted for safety and to alert the public and emergency personnel. Contact local vendors and installers for appropriate products and instructions and/or visit www.ndow.org/Nevada_Wildlife/Bear_Logic/ for more information.

- If a bear enters your home when you are present, keep out of its way and do not block its escape route.

Tips for safe-guarding campsites against bear encounters:

- Never feed wildlife.
- Always store food (including pet food), drinks, toiletries, coolers, cleaned grills, cleaned dishes, cleaning products, and all other scented items in the bear-resistant containers (storage lockers/bear boxes) provided at campsites. New bear resistant coolers that come equipped with padlock devices should always be locked to meet bear resistant requirements.
- Clean the barbecue grill after each use and store properly.
- Always place trash in bear-resistant dumpsters in campgrounds or in bear-resistant containers at campsites (storage lockers/bear boxes), and close and lock after each use.
- Never leave food or scented items unattended in campsites, tents, or vehicles. Bears can open vehicle doors and they may cause damage trying to gain entrance if there are scented items inside.
- Never leave trash at campsites.

Tips for hikers and backpackers:

- Hike in groups and keep an eye on small children.
- Keep dogs on leash. Off-leash dogs can provoke bears to respond defensively.
- Watch for signs of bears, such as bear scat along trails or claw marks on trees. Stay alert. Make noise while on trails so that bears know you are there and can avoid you.
- Never approach bears or cubs. Always, keep a safe distance.
- Store food in bear-resistant food storage canisters while recreating in the backcountry.

To report human-bear conflicts in California, contact the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Northern California dispatch at 916-445-0380. Non-emergency wildlife interactions in California State Parks can be reported to their public dispatch at (916) 358-1300. Wildlife incidents in California may also be reported online using the CDFW Wildlife Incident Reporting (WIR) system at apps.wildlife.ca.gov/wir. To report human-bear conflicts in Nevada, contact Nevada Department of Wildlife at 775-688-BEAR (2327). If the issue is an immediate threat, call the local sheriff's department or 911.

This collaborative agency effort includes California State Parks, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, El Dorado County Sheriff's Office, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Nevada State Parks, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, and the USDA Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.



Photo caption: Bayview Trailhead near Emerald Bay has been a hotspot for bear vehicle break-ins over the last few years. Backpackers and hikers should never leave groceries, animal feed, or anything scented in their vehicles and are encouraged to always lock vehicle doors. Photo credit: Charlie McCarthy, Desolation Wilderness Volunteer.