



INDUSTRY

SAFETY ALERT

Tree planter hospitalized following bear attack

Location: near Tumbler Ridge, BC

Date: July 7, 2023

Details of Close Call / Serious Incident: The BC Conservation Service is investigating a bear attack on a tree planter working near Tumbler Ridge. Conservation Officers believe it was a defensive grizzly bear attack. The worker was airlifted to the University Hospital of Northern BC in Prince George where they are recovering.

Staying safe in bear territory: Actively work to avoid and prevent bear encounters. Before heading out into the field, educate yourself about bears and bear safety. When dealing with bears, there are no set rules. Every bear will react differently; their reaction depends upon their previous experience with humans.

The most dangerous bears are:

- Habituated to human food;
- Females defending cubs;
- Defending a fresh kill.

Learnings & Suggestions: Field workers should take extra precautions when working in bear country. Make every effort to go out into the field with another person. One person can act as a lookout for the other. Keep watch for bear signs.

- Take a two-way radio with you when you go out into the field.
- Consider carrying bear deterrents, such as bear spray, and understand each deterrent's limitations. Carry your deterrents on a belt, out in front and ready to use instantly. Do not carry your deterrents in your bags, cruiser vest or backpack.
- Noises that cannot be reproduced in the wild, (e.g., a metallic noise), will let a bear know that you are approaching and give them advance notice to move out of the



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area. A can partially filled with rocks makes a loud clattering noise and is very effective in letting bears know of your presence before they pick up your scent.

- The noise of an ATV can discourage a bear. Starting the machine and revving it up can scare off a curious animal. You may need to drive the ATV around in circles to scare off the animal, but do not chase the bear.
- Take extra precautions when traveling along lakes or stream beds; bears use streams and river beds as travel routes.
- Try to plan your workday so you are not out in the early morning or evening when bears are most likely to be foraging.
- Keep any food that you take with you sealed in odor proof/bear proof containers. Make every attempt to take odorless food with you, not something with a heavy scent. Pack out any garbage.
- All Field Workers should be proficient in First Aid.

Wildlife encounters are a reality for anyone who works in the forest industry. However, things can go wrong. Therefore, proper education and safe work practices are critical to reducing the risk of harmful incidents while working around wildlife. Visit our wildlife awareness web page for more information on bear safety:

<https://www.bcforestsafe.org/resource/wildlife-awareness/>

