

Bears

The most common bear problem that New Jersey residents experience is with black bears getting into their garbage. Bears are attracted to neighborhoods by garbage odors, so properly securing your garbage is one of the best ways to prevent bears from becoming a nuisance in your community.

Residents are encouraged to work within their community to make sure all garbage is secured and kept away from bears. Black bears by nature tend to be wary of people. However, if you encounter a black bear in your neighborhood or outdoors while hiking or camping, follow these common-sense safety tips.

- Never feed or approach a bear!
- Remain calm if you encounter a bear.
- Make the bear aware of your presence by speaking in an assertive voice, singing, clapping your hands or making other noises.
- Make sure the bear has an escape route.
- If a bear enters your home, provide it with an escape route by propping all doors open.
- Avoid direct eye contact, which may be perceived by a bear as a challenge. Never run from a bear. Instead, slowly back away.
- To scare the bear away, make loud noises by yelling, banging pots and pans or using an air horn. Make yourself look as big as possible by waving your arms. If you are with someone else, stand close together with your arms raised above your head.
- The bear may utter a series of huffs, make popping jaw sounds by snapping its jaws and swat the ground. These are warning signs that you are too close. Slowly back away, avoid direct eye contact and do not run.
- If a bear stands on its hind legs or moves closer, it may be trying to get a better view or detect scents in the air. It is usually not a threatening behavior.
- Black bears will sometimes “bluff charge” when cornered, threatened, or attempting to steal food. Stand your ground, avoid direct eye contact, then slowly back away and do not run.
- If the bear does not leave, move to a secure area.
- Report black bear damage or nuisance behavior to the DEP’s 24 hour, toll-free hotline at 1-877-WARN DEP (1-877-927-6337).
- Families who live in areas frequented by black bears should have a “Bear Plan” in place for children, with an escape route and planned use of whistles and air horns.
- Black bear attacks are extremely rare. If a black bear does attack, fight back!