

Yellowstone National Park Bear Safety Brief

Bear Spray Series No. 5: First Aid for Accidental Exposure to Bear Spray

Bear spray is a non-lethal pepper deterrent containing active ingredients derived from capsicum. Capsicum derivatives are an extreme irritant of the skin, eyes, nose, throat, and lungs of bears, humans, and other mammals. There have been incidents where park visitors were accidentally exposed to bear spray from a variety of causes including: spraying bear spray into a strong headwind, running over a bear spray canister with a vehicle, dropping a bear spray canister on a sharp rock, carrying a bear spray that had a missing safety tab, and explosion of a bear spray caused by storing in a hot vehicle. The following protocol should be used in cases of accidental exposure.

- **IN THE EYES:** Hold eye open and rinse slowly and gently with cold water for 15 – 20 minutes. People who wear contact lenses should remove the lenses after rinsing the eyes for 5 minutes, after removing contacts continue rinsing the eyes for 15 – 20 minutes.
- **ON THE SKIN OR CLOTHING:** Take off contaminated clothing. Rinse skin immediately with plenty of cold water for 15 - 20 minutes or more. A non-oil based soap or detergent (Dawn Dish Soap) can be used to remove the bear spray from the skin. Pat dry with cloth towel. **Do Not Rub!** Do not use lotion, salves, or creams on the affected areas, as these trap the bear pepper spray against the skin. A wet towel or ice pack may be used on the affected areas to reduce inflammation.
- **IF INHALED:** Move away from bear spray to an area of fresh air as soon as possible.
- **IF INGESTED:** Do not induce vomiting.
- **POST EXPOSURE MONITORING:** All effects should dissipate within 45 minutes. The individual should be closely observed for symptoms of physical distress (chest pain, cold sweat, or shallow breathing). Asthma sufferers may experience acute stress. If anything other than a normal reaction occurs or the symptoms persist beyond 45 minutes, medical attention should be given or summoned immediately.
- **IF HAVING TROUBLE BREATHING OR HAVING A SKIN REACTION AFTER EXPOSURE:** Call one of the following for treatment advice – POISON CONTROL (800-222-1222), 3E MSDS (800-451-8346), Mammoth Clinic (307-344-7965)
- **EXPOSURE TO VEHICLE, OFFICE, OR EQUIPMENT:** Wash thoroughly with Dawn Dish Soap (manufacturer's recommendation).



Safety Tip: To prevent accidental exposure to bear spray, keep the safety tab on the trigger at all times except when actually spraying a charging bear.