

Why require hunters and trappers to carry bear spray?

- The primary reason is public safety and avoiding death and injury to people and also to prevent the death of grizzly bears.
- While all people should carry bear spray when in the field in grizzly bear habitat, these two activities have higher risks of bringing people into contact with grizzly bears and can be regulated by the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.
- According to the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, “Be aware that the act of hunting puts you at risk of encountering grizzlies and that elk bugling, game calls and cover scents may attract bears.” --- How to Hunt Safely in Grizzly Country brochure.
- Hunters are often alone and stalking quietly through thick brush and forest.

Is bear spray effective?

Yes! Many survivors of grizzly bear encounters and attacks have stated bear spray saved them from serious injury or death. A study published in the Journal of Wildlife Management found spray stopped bears’ undesirable behavior 92% of the time when used on brown bears; 90% for black bears and 100% for polar bears and of all persons carrying sprays, 98% were uninjured by bears in close-range encounters.

A brochure published by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee states: I already carry a gun when I hunt. Do I still need bear spray? Yes! Bear spray requires less accuracy than bullets fired at a moving target, especially when you’re under stress. Accidental discharges or badly aimed firearms can kill people, while bear spray has never caused a fatality. Bear spray leaves the bear alive, and less likely to approach humans in the future.

“From my standpoint, a take-home message is that bear spray works and you don’t always have to shoot a bear that may be acting aggressively.

It’s highly effective at reversing a charge.”

---Cecily Costello, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks chief bear scientist,
Missoulia, May 27, 2025.

