



## **Response to Black Bears in Bernards Township**

The NJ Department of Environmental Protection Division of Fish and Wildlife Bureau of Wildlife Management Wildlife Control Unit manage black bears in NJ. Law enforcement officers in Bernards Township are trained by the NJ DFW WCU to respond to sightings of black bears. These officers observe the bear in an attempt to “categorize” it as per NJ DFW WCU guidelines. For a detailed description of each category and the appropriate response by Law Enforcement and/or Fish and Wildlife, [see the attached document](#).

In Bernards Township, upon receipt of any bear report, a patrol officer will respond for safety purposes and to loosely track the bear. Law enforcement officers who have been specifically trained by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection Division of Fish and Wildlife Bureau of Wildlife Management Wildlife Control Unit, if on duty, will respond to categorize the bear and take appropriate action (unless immediate lethal response is necessary by responding officers). If these specially trained officers are not on duty and/or if a bear is no longer on the scene upon arrival, but has been a direct threat to life or property, the patrol officer will contact the NJ WCU immediately. Cat II incidents shall be reported within 24 hours. Lethal response is not warranted for a bear that cannot be identified.

Below is an outline of the three (3) incident ratings for bear sightings:

*Category I*--Constitutes a threat to life and property. These incidents must be reported to the Division of Fish and Wildlife immediately by Law Enforcement.

A Category 1 incident, if witnessed by law enforcement, constitutes a bear that requires an immediate lethal response such as bears that are an active, aggressive and an immediate threat may be destroyed.

*Category II*--Nuisance bears which are not a threat to life and property. This category includes black bears exhibiting the negative behaviors including but not limited to persistent repeated visits after property owners have followed the appropriate recommendations to deter the return of the bear. Properly trained officers (trained by the Division of Fish and Wildlife) may treat these animals with aversive conditioning techniques such as through the use of shotgun deployed rubber pellets if the opportunity is available. Cat II incidents and attempts to condition a bear must be reported to the Wildlife Control Unit. Response by WCU personnel and/or removal of the bear will be determined by the Wildlife Control Unit.

Category III--Animals that are exhibiting normal behavior and are not creating a nuisance or a threat to the safety of the public and should not be aversively conditioned by local police. This is generally a bear that lives in the area or is passing through, but has minimal contact with humans. Local law enforcement officers are not authorized to aversively condition a wandering bear. Under NO circumstances should any attempt be made by any local authorities to capture any black bear.

Suggestions for residents to help deter black bears from targeting and/or returning to their property:

1. Invest in bear-proof garbage containers. If not using bear-proof containers, store all garbage in containers with tight fitting lids in a secure area such as a basement, garage, or shed.
2. Put garbage out on collection day, not the evening before.
3. Wash garbage containers with disinfectant at least once a week. Draping ammonia or bleach soaked cloth over containers will help eliminate odors.
4. Birdfeeders should be suspended from a free hanging wire so that the bottom of the feeder is at least 8' off the ground. Feed birds only from December 1 to April 1, when bears are least active.
5. Clean outdoor grills thoroughly after each use.
6. Never feed a black bear. It is not only dangerous, but is against the law.

Recommendations if you come into contact with a black bear:

1. Never approach the animal
2. Make the animal aware of your presence by clapping, talking, singing or making other noise.
3. If at close range, back up slowly and speak in a calm, assertive voice.

Additional information:

NJ FGW September 2011 Press Release on Black Bear in North Jersey:

[http://www.nj.gov/dep/newsrel/2011/11\\_0117.htm](http://www.nj.gov/dep/newsrel/2011/11_0117.htm)

NJ FGW details "bear facts":

<http://www.nj.gov/dep/fgw/bearfacts.htm>

To report a nuisance black bear call the DEP's 24 hour toll-free hotline at:  
1-877-WARN DEP (1-877-927-6337)