



United States Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service

## PACIFIC SOUTHWEST REGION

*Restoring, Enhancing and Sustaining Forests in California, Hawaii and the Pacific Islands*

### Sierra National Forest

# PROPER FOOD STORAGE

## High Sierra Ranger District

Black Bears are common in the Sierra National Forest and are a part of the environment. Exposed to human food sources, bears will stop their normal daytime foraging and revert to a nocturnal behavior of seeking out Forest visitor's food while they sleep. Bears occasionally visit campsites during the day, tempted by the aroma of food or cooking fires. An encounter with a bear can often ruin a visit as well as personal property.

Bears are enticed by all kinds of human food. They are also attracted to grocery bags, clothes you cooked in, and anything else with an odor such as soap, sunscreen, hairspray, or toothpaste. Bears have been known to break into cars for a stick of gum or an empty soda can.

### PROPER FOOD STORAGE

- Store all food and related supplies, including ice chests, in the trunk of your vehicle. Food should be sealed in air tight containers.
- In vehicles without trunks, all food and related supplies must be stored out of sight.
- Cover your food completely to hide it from a bear's view.
- Clean the inside of your vehicle and remove and open drink containers and food (including food wrappers).
- Consider removing your child's car seat since they often have food spills and smells associated with them.
- Never leave food in your campsite unattended.
- Do not leave food or ice chests on your picnic table or in tents. Dispose of all trash properly.
- Keep a clean camp. Clean up your campsite after each meal.

### BACKCOUNTRY AND WILDERNESS USERS

Backcountry and wilderness users are required to store food or refuse in a manner designed to keep bears from gaining access to it. Visitors are encouraged to use bear-resistant food canisters to safeguard food. If a bear canister is not available, the counter-balance method of storing food is also an acceptable method.

### BEAR-RESISTANT CANISTER RENTALS

These portable containers are a very effective way for backpackers to store food in the wilderness. Each canister weighs less than 3 pounds, fits in a full-sized backpack, and is capable of holding 3 to 5 day's worth of food for one person. When using the canister, remember the following guidelines:

- Store all food, cosmetics, toothpaste, soap, and refuse in the canisters.
- At night or when you are away from camp, leave you empty pack on the ground with all pockets are flaps open.
- Put the canister 50 feet from your sleeping area.
- Leave the canister on the ground.
- Do not hang the canister from a tree.

Through a partnership with Three Forest Interpretive Association, the Forest Service offers bear canister rentals at the High Sierra Visitor Center located on Kaiser Pass Road in the Florence/Edison Lake area. Canisters are available for \$3.00 a day. A \$75.00 refundable deposit per canister is required. Canisters must be returned to the office from which they were rented.



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Food canisters are generally available for purchase and rental at sporting good stores in the local area. Below is a list of vendors in the area who sell and rent canisters:

- Backpackers Catch (559) 732-3785 (Visalia)
- California Outfitters (559) 435-2626 (Fresno)
- Herb Bauer Sporting Goods (559) 435-8600 (Fresno)
- REI (559) 261-4168 (Fresno)

### **COUNTER-BALANCE METHOD**

If you choose to store your food using this technique, consider it only a delaying tactic. Be prepared to actively defend your food and repeatedly scare bears out of your camp throughout the night. Without this negative reinforcement, bears will figure out a way to get your food. Some bears will go so far as to literally chew the branch off the tree to get at food bags.

To counter-balance:

- Find a tree with a live, down sloping branch, even if you must select a different campsite. Divide food into two balanced bags. Store soap, sunscreen, deodorant, toothpaste and garbage in the same manner.
- Use enough rope to go over the branch and back to the ground. Toss it far out on the branch where it will support the weight of the food but not a bear cub.
- Tie on and hoist the first sack up to the branch. Tie the second sack as high as you can on the rope. Put the excess rope in the sack, leaving a loop out so you can retrieve it.
- Toss or use a stick to push the lower sack until both sacks are at equal height.
- To retrieve the sacks, hook a long stick through the loop of extra rope. Pull slowly to avoid tangles.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

#### **Sierra National Forest Headquarters**

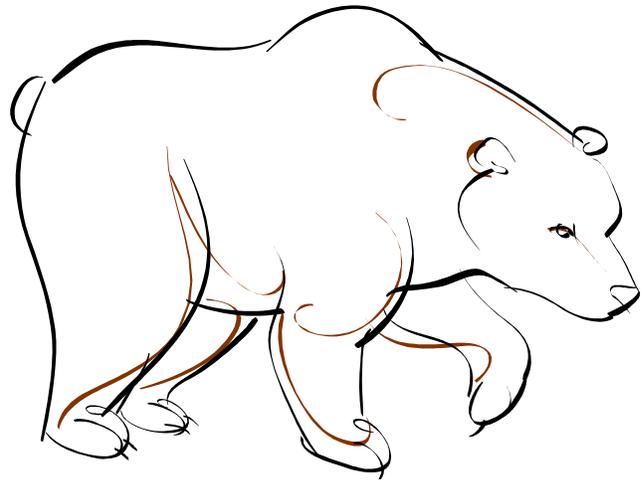
1600 Tollhouse Rd.  
Clovis, CA 93611  
559-297-0706  
(TDD) 559-322-0425

#### **High Sierra Ranger District**

P.O. Box 559  
Prather, CA 93651  
559-855-5355  
(TDD) 559-855-5367

#### **High Sierra Visitor Center**

559-877-7173 (Summer Only)



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