

An interview with Dan LeGrandeur, President of Bear Scare
By Cary Bohnet



Photo: supplied by Cary Bohnet

So you see a bear. What now?

An encounter with a bear is something many of us will experience at some point in the field. Knowing a few key pieces of information can prevent an encounter from turning dangerous and help keep you safe.

Dan LeGrandeur knows bears. With 27 years experience dealing with human wildlife conflicts Dan has an in depth understanding of bear behavior. Originally a British Columbia Conservation Officer, Dan is now president of Bear Scare which specializes in educating and handling encounters with bears to keep workers safe.

Q: *So I am working in the field and I see a bear, what is the first thing that I should be thinking?*

A: The first thing is to stop and think; what are my options? The best option with any bear encounter is to create distance between you and the bear. If possible retreat back the opposite way of the bear and be prepared to act if the bear starts to approach you.

Q: *The bear appears non-threatening, what now?*

A: In a non-threatening encounter it is very important to avoid presenting yourself as a threat to the bear. Remain calm, create distance between you and the bear and avoid any rapid movement. You should always face the bear and never run.

This is stressful event for a person however it is important to remember that most bear encounters result in the person remaining unharmed.

Q: What are the types of encounters that are dangerous?

A: An encounter with a defensive bear occurs when the bear is stressed and sees you as a threat. This could be a threat to it's cubs, a source of food or because you surprised it.

Predatory encounters with a bear are the second type and are extremely rare.

Q: How do I differentiate between the two?

A: In a defensive encounter the bear will likely be defending something. You may see cubs, an animal carcass or know that you surprised it. The bear would appear agitated, have it's ears back, vocalize such as huffing and even bluff charge. What the bear is telling you is that you are being a threat to it.

In a predatory encounter the bear is very silent and will not appear stressed. Most of the time that bear will be very focused on you with direct eye contact, it's ears forward and head up.

Q: What should I do in a defensive encounter?

A: The best way to respond is to slowly back away so that you no longer present yourself as a threat. Avoid eye contact, rapid movements, face the bear and slowly back away.

Q: What should I do in a predatory encounter?

A: If you have tried to leave the area, the bear is still following and you have no other option, you need to stand your ground. Face the bear, make yourself as big as possible by standing on a log, shout and act aggressively towards the bear.

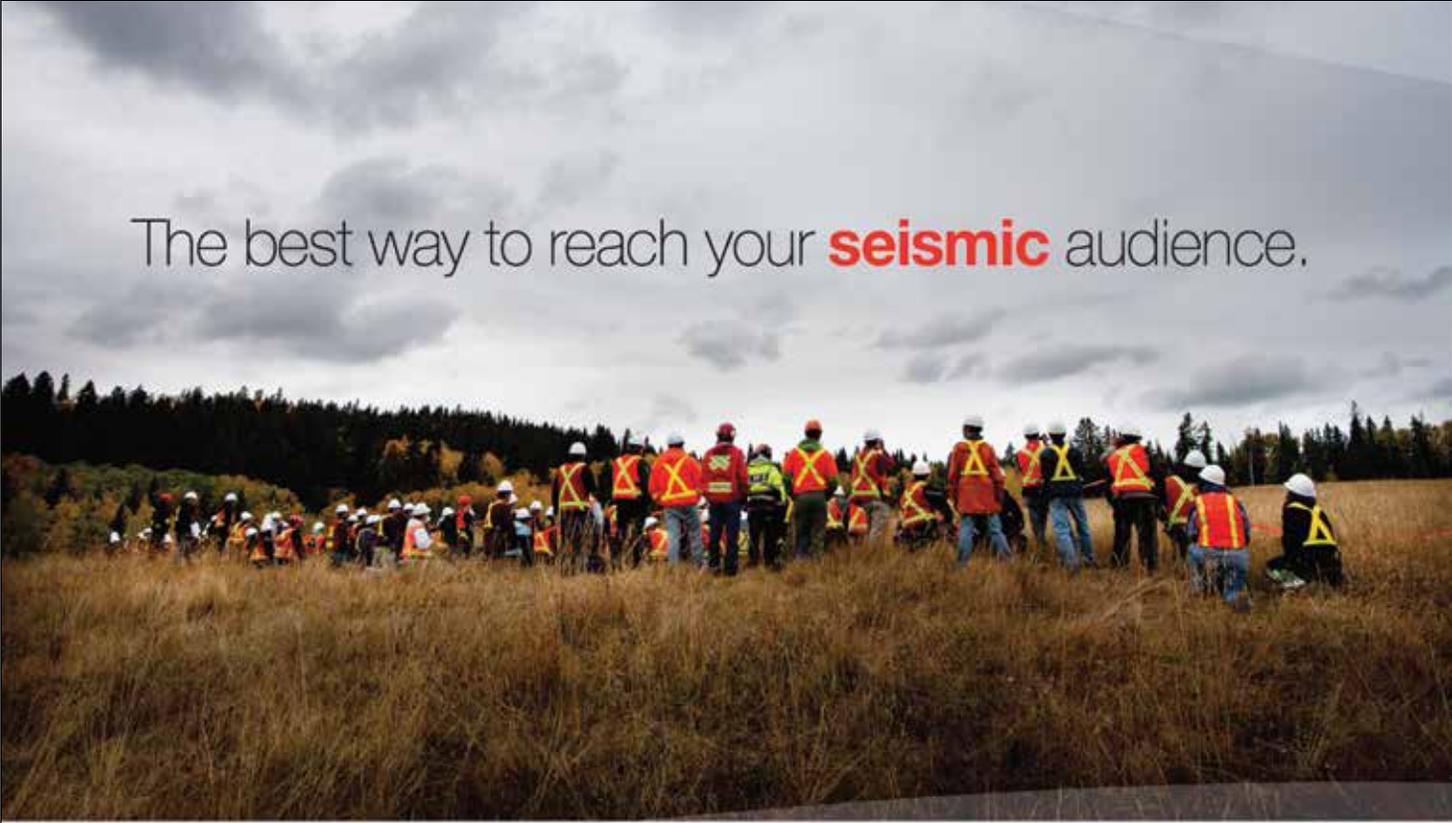
By far your best defense in either type of encounter is bear spray used within the effective range of the spray, which is 5 meters.

Q: The CAGC released a Bear Risk Matrix in the fall of 2013. How can we use this?

A: The Risk Matrix is something companies can use as a guideline to help them prepare and respond to a bear encounter in the workplace. It outlines what the response should be to keep workers safe. This includes everything from when to issue a temporary shutdown of work, call Fish and Wildlife or implement a bear monitor. It shows a course of action to take based on the specifics of an encounter and helps eliminate confusion about what to do.

Dan LeGrandeur is the President of Bear Scare. For more information on Bear Scare's training programs and services visit: www.bearscare.ca

*Cary Bohnet is the Vice President of Kodiak Wildlife Products offering wildlife safety products to companies operating in remote locations: www.kodiakcanada.com **S***



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