

# Rapid Lesson Sharing



**Event Type:** Grizzly Bear Encounter

**Date:** Sept. 2, 2013

**Location:** Lost Lake Fire – Shoshone National Forest, Wyoming

## Narrative

On arrival to the Shoshone National Forest, my crew, the White River Fire Module was given a Grizzly Bear briefing before entering the wilderness to engage the Lost Lake Fire.

Bear spray was issued to four of our ten module members, including myself. During the briefing, the key points that stuck out to me were: not to run if charged by a bear, how to properly use the bear spray by pointing it downward—preferably not into the wind, and hanging food in camp to prevent bears from being rewarded by finding food in the area.

For the Monday, Sept. 2 shift, three of us were assigned to the south lake lookout. At 1900, we started our 40-minute hike out. Not thinking of bears at that point, we started hiking out at our own pace—not making much noise. Halfway down the hike, I heard the breaking of twigs and brush ahead of me on the 40-degree slope.



*Grizzly Bear in Wyoming—not associated with this incident.*

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***“I looked up to see  
a 450-500 pound Grizzly  
coming at me  
very quickly . . .”***

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I looked up to see a 450-500 pound Grizzly coming at me very quickly—running an estimated 15 mph uphill. The bear started this charge about 60-feet downhill from me. Its head was up, mouth open. The animal’s front legs were moving at full stroke.

I immediately yelled: "GRIZZLY BEAR!" Remembering my training that had been provided earlier, I dropped my combi-tool and started fumbling for the spray that was attached to the right side of my pack. I expected the bear to be on me in a matter of seconds.

Hearing my yell, from about 100-feet behind me, my other crewmembers started yelling frantically. By the time I got the spray out and was ready to deploy it on the bear, it was quickly turning around about 25-feet down the hill from me. I believe it was bluff charge and the bear was also probably startled by all of us yelling. The bear continued downhill at an amazing speed.

In seconds, the Grizzly had disappeared into the timber.

## Lessons

I learned from this incident that when in Grizzly country, ALWAYS travel in groups. While traveling through the forest or trails, yell occasionally and bang tools on rocks to give the bear a heads-up that you are coming. Also, make sure that your bear spray is easily accessible—know that it is easy to use at a moment’s notice.

## Submitted By

Crewmember

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