

Guidelines for Bear Smart Buildings

After years of experience addressing human-bear conflict in Whistler, the Get Bear Smart Society and the Whistler Black Bear Working Group has compiled a list of tips and suggestions on how to decrease the likelihood of bears gaining access to your building. Once inside a building, bears pose a public safety risk should the building be occupied and usually cause significant property damage.

All garbage enclosures must be constructed in accordance with Bylaw 1861 and the Garbage Enclosure Guidelines (included in folder). Also in accordance with the bylaw, any areas where garbage, recycling and compost are stored (such as garages and loading bays) must also be bear-proof.

Exterior and garbage enclosure access doors (“man doors”)

- Motion sensor sliding doors are **NOT** recommended as they allow bears to easily trigger the sensor and walk into buildings. Automatic swing doors or automated roll doors operated with a control switch should be equipped with an automatic closer.
- All access doors for garbage enclosures require adequate self-closing and dual-action locking mechanisms (meaning that two separate actions are required to open the door, e.g. a dead bolt or keyed lock plus a turning knob).
- Exterior lever style door handles should not be used as they can easily be opened by bears.
- Bears have also been observed opening round turning knobs on doors. This type of knob is only recommended if combined with a knob collar and keyed lock.



Service doors for areas where garbage is stored

- All hinged service doors require a heavy-duty cane bolt at the bottom and a barrel bolt at the top of door(s) to keep the doors in place and prevent prying/damage by bears.
- Hinged doors should be made of a man made material, preferably 18 gauge steel.
- Hinged doors should open out, when possible, not in.
- Roll-up doors should be secured with a chain lock such that the door can not be opened once secure (as pictured right).
- Roll-up doors should be commercial grade (minimum 20 gauge steel for larger doors, and 22 gauge steel for smaller doors).
- Locking mechanisms are to be located on the interior (when possible); no hardware should be located on exterior service door(s).



Windows or other openings

- Double pane windows with internal locking hardware are recommended.
- If steel or metal grating is to be installed on windows, it is recommended that it is welded on from the inside, not the outside.
- If any vent, gap or other opening greater than 6" it must be sealed with metal bars/grates or extruded metal (spacing should not be larger than 6").

Siding

- Because bears have an innate desire to rip apart anything made of wood, we recommend using concrete or brick for building in bear country.
- Alternatively, man made material such as Hardy Plank reduces the likelihood of damage from bears.
- Planks should be installed to run horizontally whenever possible: this makes it much harder for bears to rip off the boards and gain access. If the main planks run vertically, then siding edges should be reinforced with a metal border, that runs over the ends horizontally (or at 90° to the main planks).
- Man made materials should be installed on anything that bears could climb.
- A concrete upstand with a minimum depth of 600 mm will deter bears from digging under the sides of buildings or ripping off boards from the sides.



These recommendations will not only decrease the likelihood of a bear accessing your building, but will create a safer environment for the building's occupants. In addition, you will save time and money over the long run by preventing costly repairs as a result of damage by bears.

To learn more about working in bear country, please visit our website at www.bearsmart.com/becoming-bear-smart/work. Download brochures at: www.bearsmart.com/brochures.

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