



ARCTIC KINGDOM

Risk Management – Human Bear Conflict Management

Policy No.: RM111

Created: April 2015

Revised: February 2020

Objective: To identify and mitigate the risks associated to working in regions inhabited by polar bears.

Note to reader: This communication is intended solely for the use of Arctic Kingdom staff. At no time are these documents to be shared or copied without the consent of the Field Planning Manager.

Introduction:

Arctic Kingdom offers small group scheduled safaris for tourists as well as private expeditions for individuals, film crews and scientists. The goal is to experience the amazing wildlife, landscapes and culture that the Arctic has to offer. Many of our trips are wildlife focused and nearly all our departures occur in areas inhabited by polar bears. The purpose of this plan is to reduce the probability of negative polar bear-human encounters, provide safe camp environments for staff and clients and ensure the conservation and wellbeing of polar bears. Each of the following sections identifies a component that will contribute to these goals.

Training and Education

All expedition leaders should complete a polar bear safety training course.

Arctic Kingdom's Polar Bear Wildlife Viewing Policy will be reviewed with all camp staff and they will be educated on how to best respond in the event of a potential conflict.

All staff responsible for the detection and deterrence of polar bears will be briefed on Arctic Kingdom's wildlife policies and deterrence techniques.

Clients will be briefed prior to any expedition through literature in the form of a trip briefing guide. Upon arrival, the expedition leader will brief clients on proper behaviour and policy around wildlife. Safety reminders during the trip will be given during daily briefings.

A training exercise and post-scenario debrief will be conducted with staff to review procedures if a bear comes into camp.

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Camp Barriers

The location and needs of each camp will dictate which types of barriers are used for each camp. All camps may use one or all the following barriers:

- Electric fence
- Working dog(s)
- Human monitor(s)
- Trip wire(s)
- Motion detector(s)

Typical Electric Fence Design

Our semi-permanent electric fence design is approximately 1.5m (60") high. We use Turbo Wire (a special poly wire with a metal filament) and/or high tensile steel wire strands spaced approximately 20cm (6"-10") apart. The strands are charged by a transformer, powered by a gas generator, that produces a current of approximately 16,000 volts. This is confirmed by testing with a digital voltmeter. The strands alternate between positive and negative currents and the fence is grounded using metal plates placed in the ground. In consultation with wildlife professionals specializing in electric fences and our own extensive experience the amount of voltage is effective and the alternating currents means the electric shock is not harmful to the bears. The fence is monitored daily by visual inspection and testing the voltage with a digital voltmeter. There are two gated entrance/exit points and a main cut off switch. The fence has high visual signs identifying it as an electric fence.

Emergency Communications

The minimum requirements for all Arctic Kingdom expeditions are as follows:

- Iridium satellite phone - primary
- Iridium satellite phone – back up
- In Reach satellite text messaging system
- VHF radios for in-camp communication
- GPS

Food Storage

All food will be stored in the kitchen and designated storage shelters in covered bins and coolers. No food will be stored in any other shelter in camp. All organic waste and grey water must be removed from camp daily. All garbage must be removed from camp on a weekly basis. The design of our camps is such that the kitchen, dining, and storage area are all concentrated in a single area.

Waste Management

Human waste – Specialized dry toilets are used that double bag all human waste into sealed plastic. When full these plastic bags are stored in rubber containers with lids and removed from camp at each supply/garbage run, which typically occurs every week.

Garbage – Stored in metal containers with latching lids and removed from camp at each supply run, which normally occurs every week.

Grey water – Sources of grey water include the bathroom and kitchen facilities. In camps set up on sea ice, holes are augered into the ice to be used as drains from each of these facilities. In camps set on land, grey water drains directly onto the gravel. Drains are located and directed away from any fresh water sources. Only biodegradable soaps are used.

Organic waste – In sea ice camps, holes are augered into the ice and used as a drain. In land camps, a deposit site is chosen away from camp where waste will be taken away at high tide. In many cases organic waste is treated as garbage and removed from camp.

Local Knowledge & Expertise

Local knowledge and expertise will be solicited from wildlife management groups and experienced guides in the area. This may include Hunters & Trappers Organizations/Associations, conservation officers, senior guides, and community elders (Inuit, Cree, Inuvialuit, etc.). Knowledge sought may include the following information:

- Bear attitude assessment
- Community radio monitoring
- Problem bear awareness
- Area sweep and site assessment

Problem bears which return repeatedly will result in notice to the local wildlife officer and a 24-hour polar bear sentry will be hired to protect the camp in question until the problem bear has been adequately handled or there is no longer a threat.

Deterrence Protocol

Active observance and the early identification of all dangerous wildlife play an important role in Arctic Kingdom's deterrence safety protocol. All staff, particularly our local guides who have the most experience with the environment and the observation of polar bears at long distances, keep watch for polar bears. With the advantage of early identification, we can observe bear behaviour and thereby have a greater understanding of its intentions. When necessary, the interpretation of these intentions may require an escalation of deterrence.

Deterrence Options

- Gather people together into a single group
- Voice – yelling & talking
- Mechanical – pots, rocks, whistles, horn, revving snowmobile/ATV engines
- Noisemakers – flares, bangers, crackers, screamers
- Physical – bird shot into the ground, bean bags, rubber slugs
- Lethal – slugs, bullets

Escalating Response Ranges

>500m	Account for all people on location and announce the location of the bear. Consider restricting free movement. Designated staff prepare deterrents. Inuit guides prepare lethal rounds.
100-500m	Gather people together. Remind people they are to follow instructions immediately. Implement restrictions on free movement.
50-100m	Consider the use of long range deterrents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • flares and/or bear bangers using a 12 gauge shotgun for maximum distance and noise. • rev engines of snowmobiles or ATVs
10-50m (non-aggressive)	Use noisemaker and physical deterrents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vocalize to the bear; movements such as hand waving • whistles, horns, rocks, cocking a 12 gauge shotgun • starter pistol caps, bear bangers • bird shot aimed in front of an advancing bear to create spray and vibrations • rubber bullets – aim for hind quarters <p>NOTE: KEEP IN MIND RUBBER BULLETS STORED IN BELOW FREEZING TEMPERATURES CAN BE LETHAL.</p>
< 30m	Inuit guides are prepared with lethal rounds if lives are perceived to be in danger. Target chest and shoulder.

Protocol after a Defensive Wildlife Kill

1. Secure the scene and ensure all participants and staff are in a safe zone. Recent kills may attract other animals. Prevent anyone from taking pictures.
2. Contact the AK office and provide details of the incident.
3. Contact the wildlife officer in the local community and provide the details of the incident. Stick to the facts and avoid incriminating statements.
4. Wait for the wildlife officer to arrive and deal with the animal. Fill out any report that is necessary and refer any further action to the Chief Expedition Officer.
5. Contact the local HTO (in Nunavut) to report the kill. (Note: should this be done by CEO?)
6. Complete an incident report form.
7. Conduct a debriefing with participants and staff. This will be a very traumatic incident for most participants. Be sure they understand the reasons for the kill.
8. Individual, informal follow up may be required after the formal debriefing.

Appendix A: Polar Bear Safety Plan Template

Trip Name:

Year:

Camp type: ☐ land ☐ ice

Is viewing polar bears the primary trip focus? ☐ yes ☐ no

Nearest community:

Transportation method: ☐ snowmobile ☐ ATV ☐ boat ☐ aircraft ☐ other:

Preventative measures used: ☐ electric fence ☐ working dogs ☐ night guard ☐ day guard

List of deterrents available in camp:

Quantity	Deterrent	Storage Location

List of staff capable of bear deterrence:

Name	PAL #

Firearms assignments:

Name	Firearm assigned	Storage location