Compliance Review eSafetyFirst Canada

Online Wildlife & Bear Awareness Course

The purpose of this document is to outline the compliance review for the **revised** eSafetyFirst Canada (eSafetyFirst) online **Wildlife & Bear Awareness** course. The course was viewed in its entirety and then reviewed chapter by chapter to determine both compliance and alignment with federal and provincial jurisdictions in Canada as well as applicable wildlife safety association standards.

Evaluating an online Wildlife & Bear Awareness training course requires verifying that the content fulfills **Canadian federal and provincial Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) legislation** (such as the Canada Labour Code Part II, BC OHS Regulation Part 4, Alberta OHS Code Part 2, and Saskatchewan OHS Regulations) as well as standards established by regional wildlife initiatives such as Alberta BearSmart.

The course adheres to current federal and provincial OHS legislation and meets current industry standards. There are some points for improvement, please see the notes in each section below.

All corrective actions are noted in **BOLD RED** font.

Section 1: Wildlife Awareness Introduction

Focus: Legislation, roles, responsibilities, and worker rights.

Below are the requirements under this subject heading that a wildlife and bear awareness course would need to cover to meet compliance requirements.

- **Identify Employer and Worker Responsibilities:** State employer obligations to perform site hazard assessments, implement control measures, and provide adequate wildlife safety training under various provincial OHS legislation models. (e.g., *Alberta OHS Act General Duty Clause*, *BC OHS Regulation Section 4.28*, *Saskatchewan OHS Regulations Part 3*), ideally using a broad overview.
- **Understand Worker Rights:** Explain the worker's statutory right to know about wildlife hazards on site, right to participate in safety planning, and right to refuse unsafe work when adequate controls or deterrents (e.g., bear spray, communication devices) are absent.
- **Recognize Regulatory Compliance:** Identify the federal and provincial legal protections for wildlife (e.g., *Species at Risk Act*, *BC Wildlife Act*, *Alberta Wildlife Act*, *Saskatchewan Wildlife Act*) and explain the legal restrictions regarding feeding, harassing, or harming wildlife on commercial job sites.
- **Define Site-Specific Safety Protocols:** Describe the purpose of Emergency Response Plans (ERPs), Working Alone protocols, check-in schedules, and site orientation requirements before mobilizing to wilderness worksites.

This module meets the requirements outlined above. It also introduces the concepts of risk assessment and controls.

Some points for improvement:

- Slide 17 which addresses when work cannot proceed safely re-narrates the material found on slide 16.
- A quiz question involving wildlife sign talks about scat but it is not mentioned until Module 3.

Section 2: Working Around Wildlife

Focus: Proactive hazard controls, attractant management, and preventing habituation.

The flowing points regarding working around wildlife would need to be met for a course to be compliant.

- **Distinguish Habituation vs. Food Conditioning:** Explain how wildlife becomes accustomed to human presence (habituation) versus associating humans with food sources (food conditioning), and describe why conditioned animals pose the highest safety risk to field workers.
- **Implement Attractant Controls:** Demonstrate best practices for the storage, handling, and disposal of food, garbage, petroleum products, gray water, and scented personal care items using bear-resistant containers and designated site facilities.
- **Conduct Field Hazard Assessments:** Recognize physical field signs indicating recent animal activity (such as tracks, scat, diggings, claw marks, torn logs, or animal carcasses/food caches) and determine when to halt work or re-route.
- **Apply Hierarchy of Controls:** Identify engineering and administrative controls for remote camps and job sites, including electric fencing, proper lighting, clearing sightlines, buddy systems, and noise-making travel protocols.

The course covers these points well. It also goes further to identify working alone as an additional hazard and explains how it must be controlled. This module also covers a wildlife management plan and an emergency response plan. This module more than meets requirement to be considered compliant.

Section 3: Wildlife & Bear Awareness

Focus: Bear identification, behavior assessment, encounter response, and deterrent deployment.

Working in bear habitats is very common in most of Canada but more so in the western provinces. To be considered compliant a course must address the following points.

- **Differentiate Bear Species:** Correctly distinguish between Black Bears and Grizzly Bears using key physical traits (shoulder hump, facial profile, claw length, ear shape) rather than relying on coat color alone.

- **Assess Bear Behavior:** Evaluate bear body language and vocalizations to classify an encounter as **curious**, **defensive** (protecting cubs, food, or space), or **predatory/aggressive**.
- **Execute Encounter Procedures:**
    - Apply correct non-charging response steps (stop, remain calm, speak softly, back away slowly without turning around or running).
    - Differentiate between **defensive charge responses** (holding ground, using bear spray, playing dead if contact occurs) and **predatory attack responses** (fighting aggressively with all available tools, target eyes/nose).
- **Master Bear Spray and Deterrents:**
    - Explain the mechanics, effective range according to the OEM, wind considerations, shelf life, and proper hip/chest holster carry of approved bear spray. The course should note what to do in the case of an accidental discharge, cover first-aid, and any WHMIS and TDG requirements.
    - Describe safe transport and storage regulations (avoiding unventilated vehicle cabins or direct heat).
    - Detail the correct use of secondary deterrents such as air horns and bear bangers (including trajectory awareness to avoid firing behind the animal).

The course covers all of the above points very well. The course only addresses noise makers, bear bangers and other pyrotechnic types of deterrents as requiring specialized training and special written procedures. **This does not affect compliance whatsoever**.

Some points to note:

- ~~The zoological designation for grizzly bear ia usrus arctos horribilis. The 5th slide notes just ursus arctos. I am not sure if this was done just for the sake of being able to fit the name In the area on the slide.~~ **This is corrected in a revised slide**
- ~~The map in slide 5 might be considered misleading as there are a little over 1100 grizzly bears in Alberta. Banff National Park and Kananaskis Provincial Parks are both protected breeding areas for grizzly bears. Once again, does not affect the content but some audiences might make note.~~ **This is corrected in a revised slide**
- ~~Slide 16 the narration doesn't quite match the checklist but it works. This might be considered nitpicking but I thought it was worth mentioning.~~ **This is corrected**

Section 4: Other Wildlife Animals and Dangers

Focus: Non-bear wildlife, insects, toxic plants, and biological hazards.

- **Manage Large Mammal Encounters:** Describe identification, warning signs, and appropriate encounter protocols for Cougars/Pumas (maintaining eye contact, appearing large, fighting back), Wolves/Canids, and Large Ungulates (Moose, Elk, Bison—e.g., putting large obstacles between yourself and a charging moose).

- **Mitigate Insect and Arachnid Hazards:** Identify regional biting and stinging insects (ticks, wasps, mosquitoes) and understand preventive measures for **Lyme Disease**, allergic reactions, and proper tick removal techniques.
- **Identify Hazardous Plants:** Recognize native toxic or irritating flora common across Western and Northern Canada and outline immediate first-aid procedures for exposure.
- **Understand Zoonoses and Environmental Diseases:** Explain the transmission modes, symptoms, and field hygiene controls for regional zoonotic diseases such as Hantavirus (rodent droppings), and Rabies.
- **Initiate Incident Reporting and Evacuation:** Outline the protocol for reporting wildlife encounters or injuries to site supervisors and provincial conservation authorities

The course covers this well and provides a good overview of other types of fauna and flora that have the potential to harm workers working in close proximity or encountering them. This meets compliance requirements.

There are some points to consider:

- ~~There are some additional harmful plants that workers can encounter such as Devil's Club, Giant Hogweed, and Stinging Nettle. On the next revision it might be a good idea to address them as well.~~ **An added slide fixes this**
- This module mentions a "poison-centre". It might be a good idea on the next revision to mention that Canda has a nation-wide poison control centre contact. More information can be found here, https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/news/2023/03/canada-launches-new-toll-free-1-844-poison-x-number-for-poison-centres.html

This revision of the **Wildlife & Bear Awareness Course** goes over and above what is required by legislation and current standards.

References:

1. **Alberta BearSmart Program:** *Government of Alberta* — Provides the scientific baseline for human-wildlife conflict mitigation, bear behavior, and correct deterrent use. https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-bearsmart-program-overview
2. **CCOHS:** Working With or Near Wildlife – Physical Aggression https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/safety_haz/working-with-or-near-wildlife-physical-aggression.html



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