

NAVAJO NATION
Department of Fish and Wildlife



Contacts

Navajo Fish and Wildlife

Phone: (928) 871-6450

Division of Natural Resources Dispatch

Phone: (928) 871-7298

Navajo Police Department

Phone: (928) 357-6677

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release, August 24, 2026

Fatal bear attack reported near Crystal, New Mexico

NNDFW urges the public to avoid the area and use caution in bear country

CRYSTAL, N.M. - At approximately 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, August 20, the Navajo Police Department Window Rock District received a report that an adult male had been attacked by a bear near Crystal, New Mexico. Navajo Police, the Navajo Nation Department of Fish and Wildlife (NNDFW), and the Navajo Department of Criminal Investigations responded to the scene.

The bear was shot and wounded by responding law enforcement officers but fled into nearby woods. Responders later located and neutralized the bear. The victim died from injuries sustained in the attack.

NNDFW extends its deepest condolences to the victim's family, loved ones, and the Crystal community during this difficult time.

Black bears are wild animals and should always be considered unpredictable and potentially dangerous. Bear attacks on people are uncommon, but any bear may defend itself or become aggressive. Never approach, feed, follow, or attempt to photograph a bear at close range.

Food is the cause of most human-bear conflicts. A large portion of their summer diets consists of grasses, roots, plants, berries and insects. The likelihood of conflicts with people rises during dry periods in late spring and early summer especially during periods of prolong drought. When a bear's normal food supply is decreased, they seek alternate food sources.

Residents living in or near bear country can help reduce conflicts by:

- Securing household garbage and livestock feed,
- Bringing pet food indoors,
- Cleaning grills after use, removing other food attractants,
- Keeping homesites/campsites clean.
- Remove brush and cover around homes and corrals.
- Never intentionally feed a bear.
- Keep doors and windows closed

If you encounter a bear:

- Do not run. Face the bear and back away slowly, giving it a clear route to leave.
- If the bear approaches, stand your ground, make yourself look large, and make loud noises.
- Keep children close and dogs leashed. Do not allow a dog to chase or confront a bear.
- If a black bear attacks, fight back using anything available. Do not play dead.
- For an attack or immediate threat to human life or public safety, call the nearest Navajo Police District or the Division of Natural Resources Dispatch.

Public safety is NNDFW's highest priority in human-wildlife conflict situations.