

Fatal AB Bear Attack Is a Reminder of Safety Hazards of Wildlife



When you think about the safety hazards workers face, wild animals won't be on the list for most workplaces. But for certain industry sectors, such as forestry, oil and gas, and mineral exploration, wildlife poses a serious safety hazard.

An oilsands worker in Alberta tragically learned this lesson the hard way. The female worker was attacked and killed by a bear at Suncor Energy's base plant north of Fort McMurray while she was doing electrical work. She wasn't alone at the time. In fact, other workers tried to scare the bear away with horns, but were unable to do so.

Suncor said that it provides wildlife training to workers, but they weren't carrying bear spray at the time of the incident because the area was industrial and busy.

A similar incident happened in Aug. 2013 in Yukon, when a grizzly bear attacked a worker at a fly-in mineral exploration camp. The female bear, who was with two cubs, injured a worker and killed one of her dogs.

Bottom line: Workers who work outside and especially those in the wilderness may be endangered by wildlife and so you must take appropriate steps to protect them from wild animals, such as bears, snakes, wolves and even bugs. For example:

- Train workers on how to avoid and handle encounters with bears.
- Give them tips on what to do if they see a bear and if one attacks