

County tackles bear problems with more notices

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El Dorado County Environmental Management has been hearing more from residents who are fed up with their neighbors leaving out trash for bears, and has started issuing more letters warning those out of compliance with the county's bear-proof trash can codes.

"We've had more complaints recently so we've been sending out more notices," said director Ginger Huber. It is illegal throughout Tahoe to provide food to bears by leaving out trash.

Repeat violators are forced to purchase a bear-proof metal container, which can cost \$1,200.

In the Kingsbury area a few years back, several neighbors successfully sued a neighbor who was providing food to bears after the animals began breaking into homes and damaging property.

Residents are also starting to get the word that they can solve bear problems in an inexpensive way, according to BEAR League Executive Director Ann Bryant.

A new type of trash can available for \$70 has proven its bear-proof attributes in Tahoe after going into use last summer, Bryant said. Those who use the containers can avoid a citation that requires them to buy the more expensive enclosures.

Now visitors and renters have to get on the bandwagon, she said.

Tahoe is experiencing the typical summer bear run-ins. Several have broken into homes and cars and several have been euthanized.

The Tahoe Daily Tribune was contacted by media outlets worldwide after it ran a photo of a young bear at the steering wheel of a vintage red Buick convertible.

But many don't realize bear encounters are a daily occurrence in this mountain town.

El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago is currently dealing with her own bear problem after moving into a home where the previous renter had a habit of feeding neighborhood bears.

It stops by at least once a day, she said.

So she's been proactive, spraying her trash cans with PineSol and keeping the cans inside until trash day. She intends to buy one of the low-cost bear cans soon.

"Listening to the advice the BEAR League puts forth is the best thing you can do," she said.

The League contacted Santiago earlier in the summer to discuss what they perceived as a chronic problem at the South Shore of feeding bears with left-out trash.

"The biggest problem is dealing with the visitors that come and leave their garbage out for several days," Santiago said. "Environmental Management has worked with those people and to make sure they know they can't leave their garbage out like that."

Bryant said people should not be afraid of bears and should try to scare them away if they enter a neighborhood. Homes with dogs are often not bothered.

"They do not hang out where they are being hassled," she said.

Bear solutions:

- Cheap bear-proof trash cans are available from Tahoe Bear Can Co. for \$70. Call (530) 906-0327.
- To complain about trash accessed by bears: county Environmental Management Department, (530) 573-3450.
- For advice on non-lethal ways to address a bear problem: BEAR League, (530) 525-7297.