

Encountering Wildlife

Encountering wildlife is a common occurrence for workers in the solid waste and resource management industry. Whether it be a raccoon, bear, fox, coyote, vulture, or other animal, wildlife may often scavenge for food in dumpsters or at a landfill or transfer station.

Whether you're collecting refuse, operating equipment, or maintaining facilities, knowing how to stay safe when encountering wildlife is crucial for your well-being and the conservation of local ecosystems. SWANA emphasizes the following tips to ensure your safety and minimize the impact on wildlife.

Secure waste and food sources.

- Keep areas clean.
- Cover food and drinks.

Wear proper gear.

- **Dress appropriately** to perform your duties.
- **Consider wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)** such as gloves, boots, or eye protection to minimize physical contact with wildlife or their habitats.

Seek first aid or medical attention if necessary.

- In the event of an encounter resulting in injury such as bites or scratches, **seek immediate medical attention** and report the incident to your supervisor.

Communicate and report sightings.

- **Alert others.** Inform coworkers and supervisors if you encounter wildlife near work areas.
- **Report unusual behavior.** If you observe wildlife exhibiting unusual behavior or signs of illness, report it to appropriate authorities.

Educate yourself.

- **Know the local wildlife.** Understanding their behaviors and habitats can help you anticipate encounters and react appropriately.
- **Ensure all employees receive training** on wildlife awareness and safety protocols.

Be aware and maintain a safe distance.

- **Do not approach animals.** Avoid approaching wildlife, especially if they appear agitated or defensive.
- **Be aware of your surroundings.** When approaching dumpsters, trucks, or containers, check that no wildlife is inside before getting too close.

Remain composed and respectful.

- If you encounter wildlife unexpectedly, **stay calm and move slowly.**
- **Do not feed animals.** This can be dangerous and can also pose risks to both the wildlife and humans involved.

Respect wildlife and their habitats.

- **Stay on designated paths.**
- **Keep noise levels low,** especially near sensitive wildlife habitats, to avoid causing stress to animals.



Ensure your safety while promoting coexistence with wildlife in your daily work activities. Remember, respecting wildlife and their habitats is not only essential for your well-being but also contributes to the preservation of natural ecosystems. Stay informed, stay cautious, and stay safe!

