

## **Safety is the Watchword as Hunting Season Nears**

### **Local News**

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OLYMPIA - With the black bear hunting season opening throughout most of the state Aug. 1, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) reminds hunters and others recreating outdoors to be safety conscious. "A variety of people, including hunters, hikers, anglers and campers, share the outdoors in Washington," said Bruce Bjork, chief of WDFW enforcement. "We all must do our part to stay safe, as well as ensure the safety of others." While fatal hunting incidents involving non-hunters are rare, last August in Skagit County a hiker was shot and killed by a hunter who mistook her for a bear. That incident was the state's first hunting-related fatality involving a non-hunter in at least a quarter-century.

A basic rule for hunters is to "know your target and what's beyond it" before shooting, said Bjork. That's one of several important safety rules taught during state hunter-education courses, required for all first-time hunters born after Jan. 1, 1972. Others spending time outdoors are also advised to take precautions. WDFW offers the following safety tips to anyone recreating outdoors during hunting seasons: Wear brightly colored clothing: Make yourself visible by wearing bright colors, such as blaze orange. Avoid wearing earth-tones. Make noise: Alert hunters to your presence by talking, singing or whistling. If you hear someone shooting, let the hunters know you are in the area by raising your voice. Remain alert and never assume you are alone: Hikers, hunters, forest-product workers and anglers may be present in remote areas. Be aware of hunting seasons: Hunting seasons occur in Washington throughout the year, except June and July. More information on hunting seasons is available on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/game/hunter/hunter.htm>. The black bear season, which often draws thousands of hunters, is the first of several hunting seasons scheduled to open in the coming weeks. Several other hunts get under way in September, including those for forest grouse and waterfowl, as well as archery seasons for cougar, deer and elk. Popular modern-firearm hunts for deer and elk open later in the fall. More than 200,000 hunters go afield each year in Washington. Hunting is lawful on most public lands except national and state parks, and on private land with land-owner permission. For more information about hunting in Washington, visit WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting>. Information on hunter safety and hunter education classes can be found at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/huntered>.