

## APPENDIX J: POLAR BEAR INTERACTION GUIDANCE

1. This Appendix provides policies, tactics, and training for interacting with polar bear (*Ursa Maritimus*).
2. In the course of routine Arctic operations polar bear encounters are inevitable. Proper response to polar bear sightings can significantly influence our impacts and potential negative outcomes. For the purposes of this Appendix, polar bear interactions include, but are not limited to, polar bear reactions to the ship's presence and polar bear approaches to the cutter, small boats, or personnel.
  - a. Officers of the Deck (OOD) – shall follow the guidance contained while conning in and around the ice, conducting an on-ice deployment, and in response to polar bear sightings.
  - b. On-ice groups – Coast Guard and science personnel working on ice near the cutter or boats, or as an autonomous operation shall adhere to the tactics described when a polar bear encroaches an active on-ice deployment site.
  - c. Helicopter personnel – Airborne activities will be conducted in a manner that prevents unnecessarily close approaches to polar bear.
3. HEALY's overall objective is to safely complete assigned science missions while minimizing polar bear interactions or activities that could negatively impact the bear's habitat, ship's personnel or equipment. To meet that objective, operations will be guided by the following priorities:
  - a. Polar bear interactions will be minimized or avoided. The cutter, its science equipment, small boats, and helicopter, if embarked, will be operated to minimize the chance of a polar bear interaction.
  - b. While making way through the ice or open water, OODs shall not steer towards sighted polar bear and will attempt to maneuver to avoid endangering a polar bear. During transits and through the course of non-emergent operations, reductions in vessel speed should be considered upon sighting a polar bear. Approaches within one-half mile of any polar bear shall be avoided. If a bear is sighted within this range, maneuver the ship to increase range and minimize potential harm.
  - c. Deployed helicopters shall not land in areas where polar bear or fresh tracks have been sighted, and shall not approach polar bear within a quarter mile unless operating under an approved protocol.
  - d. While preparing for and executing on-ice deployments, sound risk management will be used in attempt to avoid polar bear interactions. Extra caution will be exercised if polar bear or tracks have been recently sighted. Once on the ice, active scanning will ensure approaching polar bears are identified prior to posing undue risk to personnel on the ice.
  - e. A bear watch will normally be positioned on the forecastle or bridge for increased visibility. The need for an additional/second bear watch on-ice will be evaluated during

the operation. If visibility drops to a range that would not allow safe recovery in response to a bear, a second on-ice Bear Watch may be assigned.

- i. The primary bear watch will be qualified and equipped with the .375 high power rifle.
  - ii. On-ice bear watch personnel will be qualified and equipped with a 12 gauge riot shotgun, armed with slug rounds.
  - iii. Bear watch personnel will complete all requirements to carry firearms as outlined in ref (e).
- f. All hands serve as lookouts. Although a specific person is designated for armed deterrence duty, all personnel shall keep their eyes and ears tuned for signs of Polar bear. The OOD shall ensure the bridge watch is monitoring the site from the bridge or the aloft conning station. Ice Rescuers, designated armed bear watch, and personnel on deck shall continuously scan the horizon, leads, and rubble ice for polar bear. Any tracks, carcasses, or scat shall immediately be reported to the OOD.
- g. When a polar bear interaction is unavoidable, defensive measures such as rapid sounding of ships whistle, recovering all personnel to the cutter and raising the brow will be the primary programmed response.
- i. When personnel are directed to evacuate the ice due to the presence of a polar bear, they shall do so in an expedient manner. Retreat to groups, speak in loud voices and work back to the cutter.
  - ii. Running and working alone should be avoided.
- h. Use of Force against Polar bears is limited to the ship's whistle and alarms to serve as a noise deterrent and deadly force with a weapon. The ship's whistle will also be used to recall personnel from the ice and serve as auditory deterrence.
- i. If the Polar bear has been spotted or reported, HEALY will sound short, rapid blasts on the ship's whistle, indicating to those on the ice to return to the ship. Do not wait for members to be in immediate danger before deterring a bear with noise, a charging Polar bear will travel 25 yards in about 2 seconds.
  - ii. If the decision has been made to use deadly force, shots will be to kill. The target area for a charging bear will be center mass to ensure hitting vital organs. Head shots are not recommended because it is the smallest target on a bear. After the bear has been shot, no member of the crew or science party will approach the animal. Everyone will retreat from the area and a formal report of the interaction will be sent to D17, PACAREA, and Headquarters, per reference (f).
  - iii. Deadly force against polar bear shall be used only as a last resort to protecting personnel. Bear watch personnel are authorized to use deadly force when not doing so will pose undue risk to personnel. This decision must be founded on the best judgment of the bear watch and is rooted in Coast Guard Use of Force fundamentals.

- iv. The choice to use deadly force must not be taken lightly; this decision will be highly scrutinized and must be clearly articulated after the fact. If in doubt, apply the reasonable person test, i.e. if given the circumstances would a reasonable person believe that not using deadly force would have placed ships company or science personnel at undue risk. If so, use deadly force.
- v. Injuring or killing a polar bear is not authorized to protect materials or equipment.
- i. After sighting a polar bear in the vicinity of on-ice activities, operations will normally cease. Personnel will return to the cutter. Gear left behind on the ice will be minimized if time permits.