

Occupational Dog Bite Prevention

Training Employees To Protect Themselves From Dog Attacks!

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Introduction

Dog bite attacks occur each year in the U.S., requiring medical treatment. Field employees account for many of these dog bite victims. Each year, thousands are seriously injured by dog bites. Medical bills for treatment of these dog bites are astronomical. Regrettably, the emotional damage to the victims is even higher. When a dog bites once, odds are that the dog will bite again. Knowing what to expect and how to ward off an attack are key factors in minimizing the injuries and potentially, saving a life.

History

As crime rates were rising and the LA riots were looming, dog breeders were feeding the fear among the general public. As the general population looked for a way to protect their homes and families, breeders started offering more aggressive dogs. The family dog was being replaced with more aggressive breeds, such as Pit Bulls, Rottweilers, and Dogos.

With more aggressive dogs among the general population, it became more dangerous for field employees, such as postal workers, meter readers, and others to make routine calls. Even though dog bite incidents had increased, the managers and supervisors of these employees were reluctant to acknowledge the need for safety training. They were not in the field anymore, and weren't aware of how the climate had changed for their employees.

After two fatalities, I approached the local San Diego Postal Service, where I was shown the video used to train the employees. I advised them that it was highly ineffective, and realized that I could do something to help. The safety specialist agreed to let me pitch a safety program, at my expense.

Since that time, companies have also become more aware of the need to provide training for dog bite safety. Utility companies have made things easier for employees with automated meters and safety gear. Field employees know that if there is an aggressive dog, it is dangerous no matter what you do. Some dogs will actually attack the vehicle itself. Dogs have been known to come through an open window on a vehicle to attack. Every employee needs to know what to do in a crisis situation.

Occupational Dog Bite Prevention Training

This presentation will feature live dogs and allow everyone to experience the full force and reality of a crisis situation. The live dogs bring a reality and sense of urgency that video or books cannot deliver. After just one session, you will be significantly more prepared to handle an attack. This is a very interactive class! Learn the differences between defensive and predatory dogs. We will show you the advantage that an attacking dog has over the employee.

We will also demonstrate what employees need to know to protect themselves. The dogs will show how quickly they can take a man down. What are the dog's weaknesses and the employee's strengths?

Topics include:

- Canine statistics
- Canine behavior
- Dangerous breeds
- Self defense
- Interactive scenarios
- Self-protection devices
- Questions answered

While the majority of dogs you will encounter in day-to-day activities will not be waiting for an attack, understanding the psychology of the dog and how his instincts work will help your employees know how to avoid an attack, and will give practical training in the event that one of your employees is ever taken off guard.

Compelling Facts and Statistics about Dog Bites

- There are 65 million dogs in America.
- Five million people are bitten annually.
- There are 15–30 fatalities per year.
- Dog bites rank 2nd in annual emergency room incidents for children (approximately 925 per day).
- Every 40 seconds, someone in the U.S. seeks medical attention for a dog-bite-related injury.
- Rottweilers are responsible for the most deaths of children.
- Over 5,000 postal workers are bitten each year, or approximately 16 letter carriers bitten per delivery day.
- On a typical 500-household route, a meter reader, cable installer, delivery person or postal carrier will encounter 300 dogs; most of them will be aggressive.



- Dog bites are one of the fastest-growing litigation opportunities today (with over \$1 billion paid in settlements paid each year).

Medical expenses, workers' compensation, legal costs, delivery curtailment, carrier replacement, and other costs associated with dog bite accidents are estimated to exceed \$25 million annually for the Postal Service. The cost in employee pain and suffering cannot be measured.

Any dog bite is serious. Puncture wounds easily become infected, leading to permanent scars. Because of the depth of the wound, it can cause nerve damage and long-term loss of feeling or function. Many communities have leash laws requiring owners to leash their dogs, but unfortunately, dog owners do not always take the precautions they should to protect others from their pets.

The U.S. has sustained three fatal dog attacks so far in 2010. There were 33 in 2007, 23 in 2008, and 33 in 2009.

The Deadliest States

The states that led the death toll in 2007 were Texas (7 deaths, one-bite state), Georgia (4 deaths, mixed-statute state), and Tennessee (4 deaths, mixed-statute state). The highest percentage of deaths occurred in the one-bite states and the mixed-statute states.

What to do if bitten by a dog:

- Immediately wash the wound thoroughly with soap and warm water.
- Contact your physician for additional care and advice. If you are in immediate medical distress, call an ambulance or go to the emergency room immediately.
- Tell your coworkers and family you've been bitten in case you lose consciousness.
- Report the bite to your local animal control agency and/or sheriff's department and employer (if at work). Tell the animal control official everything you know about the dog, including his owner's name, and the address where he lives or the general location. If the dog is a stray, tell the animal control official what the dog looks like, where you saw him, whether you've seen him before, and in which direction he went after the incident.
- Follow up with animal control/sheriff's department.



True Dog Bite Safety Stories

Field Verification Reading Goes Very Wrong!

The next house on Chet's route was a home with an inside meter. The people who lived there were very good customers. They always filled out their card with the read for him to pick up every month. This month he would be entering the home to do a Field Verification Read (FVR),

verifying that the meter has been read properly by the customer. FVR cards are supposed to be left on the fence or at an easily viewed location, letting the reader know they are expecting him. The card was not in its regular location. These were good customers; they were expecting him (he thought), even though the card wasn't there.

Chet went through the gate and was met by three Labradors and three little mixed dogs that had been there on every other visit he made to the home. This time, however, there was a new dog in the pack, a skittish Australian Shepherd. As he opened the gate to the driveway, he carefully drove the 150 feet to the house, with the dogs surrounding his truck. The dogs were acting like they had on other occasions, happy for company. He honked the horn several times and watched the reaction of the dogs. There was no response from the house. Because the new dog was acting very strange, he took his time getting out of the truck. After observing the dogs, he first stuck his one leg out the door while still sitting in the truck, letting the dogs smell and check him out. Chet wanted to see what reaction he would get from the pack. They were all wiggling and happy, except the new dog, but the Aussi stayed far away. There were several cars in the driveway, and he could hear music coming from the home. He got out of the truck and went into the garage. With all the dogs following, he knocked on the door; there was still no response. He went back to his truck. He sat there a minute. These were good customers; they were expecting him. He went back to the door and knocked again; again, no response.

Chet got back into his truck, turned around, and went back up the long driveway. Naturally, the dogs followed him. He parked the truck outside of the gate. He then got out of the truck to close the gate. He observed the Aussi rolling back its gums, exposing its teeth. He then realized that this dog was going to bite him and tried to shut the gate before this could happen. He then accidentally hit one of the Labradors with the gate while trying to shut it. The Aussi immediately attacked, going for Chet's face; he threw up his arm, and the Aussi bit his arm instead. He jumped backward into the back of his truck, kicking to defend himself. By the time he dove into the back of his truck, he had been badly bitten in the arm and five times in the legs, especially around his knees. It all happened in about 30 seconds. The dogs took off for the house as if they were in big trouble. He was able to get back into his truck and drove back to the PG&E yard. Once there, he was taken to the hospital. The main damage was to his arm; he still suffers from partial numbness of his thumb, index finger, and middle finger. How did this experience change the way Chet does his job? He will no longer get out of his vehicle when there are multiple large dogs around. He won't go into the yard unless the FVR card is left on the fence by the customer. As you can tell from Chet's experience, the addition of the Aussi changed the demeanor of the pack quickly. If the pack had been just the Labradors, when he accidentally hit one of them, the aggression would not have escalated like it did with the new addition. Dealing with packs should always be treated with extreme caution. Please be careful out there!!

Employee Attacked by Three Great Danes!

It was a cool February morning in Columbia, South Carolina. Andy had been reading meters for only four months. He already had a few nips on the back of his legs to remind him to always be on the lookout for dogs. This was the first time he had been in this neighborhood. Less than an hour into his route, he approached a home, got the read, and heard a woman from the next house say: "I'll come get the dogs and put them away." The dogs were three large Great Danes. The fence holding the Danes was only four feet high. The fence was 48 inches, and the dogs were 33 inches at the shoulder. It's not hard to imagine the dog's heads barking over the four-foot fence.

At this point, the dogs were running along the fence, barking, and the owner was trying to call them into the house. Andy jumped over the fence from the yard where he had just gotten the read,

into the area between the two yards. As soon as he jumped into that area, the Danes jumped out of their yard and surrounded him. Andy was now desperately trying to keep an eye on all the dogs sniffing around his legs. Remember, all this happened within seconds. The owner was now screaming for the dogs to come back, rushing to what she thought was Andy's aid. (She may have thought she was helping, but we know she was only making it worse for Andy.) Then he felt extreme pain and was stunned that one of the Danes had quickly bitten him under his left arm. Then the same dog bit him again on the same arm but on the forearm.

Andy was now really fighting hard, hitting the dogs with his Data Cap (handheld computer). Trying to get the dogs away from him, Andy went back over the fence back into the yard he'd just left, trying to get to the porch of the house. The Danes followed him over the fence. His right forearm was suddenly grabbed, with the dog's teeth tearing out part of the large muscle. He felt and saw the damage the dog has done. Andy felt himself pulled down but he kept himself up and continued to move toward the house. Another dog attacked his back, ripping his shirt. The neighbor continued to urge him to get into the house. He was able to finally run into the house and slam the door shut. Relieved he is safe, the door opens and the neighbor comes into the house, letting one of the Danes back in with Andy. Now there is only one dog. Andy is not going to be bit again; he backs the Dane off him; the dog retreats.

Andy is treated for his injuries and does recover. He lost over 10% of the large muscle on top of his left forearm. He also learned valuable lessons. Multiple dogs, especially dogs of great size and strength, can overpower a man very quickly. Andy kept himself from being knocked down, avoiding being "pack attacked or mauled." On the ground, the dogs would have had even greater physical advantage over him. Never depend on the customer to come to your rescue. In this case, the owner's presence gave the dogs more courage, and she could not control the dogs. Within a month or two, the customer and her dogs were gone from the home. Andy found out that the dogs had attacked on two other occasions. The customer could not get insurance because of the aggressive history of the dogs she owned. These dogs are extremely dangerous because they have been allowed to bite on several occasions. They will attack again.

Why Should a Community Outlaw the Continuous Chaining or Tethering of Dogs?

Animal control and humane agencies receive countless calls every day from citizens concerned about animals that are continuously chained or tethered. Animal control officers, paid at taxpayer expense, spend many hours trying to educate pet owners about the dangers and cruelty involved in this practice. Regulations against chaining also give officers a tool to crack down on illegal dog fighting, since many fighting dogs are kept on chains.

A chained animal is caught in a vicious cycle; frustrated by long periods of boredom and social isolation, he becomes a neurotic shell of his former self, further deterring human interaction and kindness. In the end, the helpless dog can only suffer the frustration and isolation of watching the world go by, a cruel fate for what is by nature a highly social animal. Any city, county, or state that bans this practice is a safer, more humane community.

How Does Tethering or Chaining Dogs Pose a Danger to Humans?

Dogs tethered for long periods can become highly aggressive. Dogs feel naturally protective of their territory; when confronted with a perceived threat, they respond according to their fight-or-flight instinct. A chained dog, unable to take flight, often feels forced to fight, attacking any unfamiliar animal or person who unwittingly wanders into its territory.

Numerous attacks on people by tethered dogs have been documented. The *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* reported that 17% of dogs involved in fatal attacks on humans between 1979 and 1998 were restrained on their owners' property at the time of the attack, and the book *Fatal Dog Attacks* (Delise, 2002) states that 25% of fatal attacks were inflicted by chained dogs of many different breeds.

Tragically, the victims of such attacks are often *children* who are unaware of the chained dog's presence until it is too late. Furthermore, a tethered dog that finally does get loose from his chains may remain aggressive, and is likely to chase and attack unsuspecting passersby and pets.

References

Delise, Karen. 2002. *Fatal Dog Attacks: The Stories Behind the Statistics*. Manorville, NY: Anubis Press.