



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Bob Boisselle
978-664-7722
Robert.f.boisselle@usps.gov
usps.com/news
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Beware: 'Dog Bite Prevention Week'

Postmaster Artie Guenette, Millbury today called for the cooperation of dog owners in keeping their pets restrained during mail delivery times.

"More than 4.7 million people—most of them children and elderly--are bitten by dogs each year and last year, more than 3,000 letter carriers nationwide were victims," he said.

He made the plea for responsible pet ownership as part of National Dog Bite Prevention Week (May 18 to 24) but noted it is a year round concern.

"You can help protect your letter carrier, meter reader or newspaper delivery person by making sure your pet is properly restrained or confined," he said. "Don't think a fence is the only answer, especially if a letter carrier or delivery person has to enter your yard. Please make sure your pet is properly restrained so we can safely deliver your mail," he said.

He said the Postal Service is not anti-dog, but pro-responsibility. "If your dog attacks a letter carrier, you can be held liable for all medical expenses and other costs. You can avoid this liability by properly restraining your pet. Help our letter carriers deliver safely for you," he said.

"From nips to bites to actual dog attacks, violent dog behavior continues to pose a serious threat to our letter carriers," said Massachusetts Postal District Manager John W. "Mike" Powers III.

"Dog bites are a serious problem. They cause pain and suffering to our letter carriers and can disrupt mail delivery. Our letter carriers take pride in delivering your mail promptly and efficiently and that means being able to approach your mailbox without interference from your pet," Powers said.

The Massachusetts Postal District (ZIP Codes 010-019) experienced a dramatic increase in OSHA-recordable dog bite injuries last fiscal year, he said, jumping from 29 in Fiscal Year 2006 to 42 in Fiscal Year 2007.

District Safety Manager Robert Brooks called on dog owners to be responsible for their pets. "Responsible pet ownership includes making sure pets are properly restrained," Brooks said, and he offered the following additional suggestions for responsible pet ownership:

--When your letter carrier comes to your home, keep your dog inside, away from the door, in another room or on a leash. Don't allow your dog to bark, jump up against the door, or

bite the mail as it comes through the mail slot; this will only teach your dog to attack the letter carrier.

--If your dog has to be out during mail delivery time, make sure it is restrained and that the length of that restraint does not allow it to reach the path the mail carrier has to take in order to deliver your mail.

--Do not tie your dog near the mail receptacle.

--Do not let your child take mail from the letter carrier in the presence of your dog. Your dog's instinct is to protect the family.

--Obedience training can teach your dog proper behavior and help you control your dog in any situation.

--Spay or neuter your dog—unneutered dogs are more likely to bite.

--Make sure your dog has had its shots and is licensed.

"Pet owners complying with these suggestions will greatly reduce the threat of our letter carriers being bitten," Brooks said.

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An independent federal agency, the U.S. Postal Service is the only delivery service that visits every address in the nation – 146 million homes and businesses. It has 37,000 retail locations and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to pay for operating expenses, not tax dollars. The Postal Service has annual revenues of \$75 billion and delivers nearly half the world's mail.