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Postal Service Announces Top Dog Attack Cities

Medical, Animal Behavior, Insurance Communities, Promote Dog Bite Prevention Week

HOUSTON — The Postal Service released statistics today highlighting the cities where the most dog attacks occur nationwide. Houston tops the list with 62 letter carriers attacked in 2010. Nationwide last year, 5,669 postal employees were attacked in more than 1,400 cities, yet that pales in comparison to the 4.7 million Americans bitten annually — the majority of whom are children.

These statistics are part of the reason the Postal Service recognizes National Dog Bite Prevention Week, May 15-21. The annual event provides dog attack prevention tips and information on responsible pet ownership.

Beyond the needless pain and suffering, medical expenses from dog attacks cost the Postal Service nearly \$1.2 million last year. According to the Insurance Information Institute, dog attacks accounted for more than one-third of all homeowners insurance liability claims paid out in 2010, costing nearly \$413 million.

Rounding out the top 10 rankings for 2010 are:

Ranking	City(s)	Attacks
2	Columbus, OH, and San Diego, CA	45 each
3	Los Angeles, CA	44
4	Louisville, KY	40
5	San Antonio, TX, and St. Louis, MO	39 each
6	Cleveland, OH, and Phoenix, AZ	38 each
7	Minneapolis, MN, and Portland, OR	35 each
8	Denver, CO, and Philadelphia, PA	31 each
9	Sacramento, CA	30
10	Seattle, WA	28

Visit this [link](#) to view the top 25 rankings.

“We often hear two comments relating to the Postal Service, ‘the check’s in the mail,’ and ‘don’t worry, my dog won’t bite’. Given the right circumstances, any dog can bite. Dog attacks are a nationwide issue and not just a postal problem,” said Matthew Lopez, Houston Postmaster. “Working with animal behavior experts, we’ve developed tips to avoid dog attacks, and for dog owners, tips for practicing responsible pet ownership.”

To spread the word that dog attacks are preventable, the Postal Service is working with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) www.aap.org, American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) www.avma.org, and the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) www.plasticsurgery.org. Other organizations include the American Society of Maxillofacial Surgeons (ASMS) www.maxface.org, the American Society of Reconstructive Microsurgery (ASRM) www.microsurg.org, Prevent The Bite www.preventthebite.org and the Insurance Information Institute www.iii.org.

The AVMA offers the following tips:

How to Avoid Being Bitten

- Don't run past a dog. The dog's natural instinct is to chase and catch you.
- If a dog threatens you, don't scream. Avoid eye contact. Try to remain motionless until the dog leaves, then back away slowly until the dog is out of sight.
- Don't approach a strange dog, especially one that's tethered or confined.
- People choosing to pet dogs should obtain permission from the owner first and always let a dog see and sniff them before petting the animal.
- If you believe a dog is about to attack you, try to place something between yourself and the dog, such as a backpack or a bicycle.

How to Be a Responsible Dog Owner

- Obedience training can teach dogs proper behavior and help owners control their dogs.
- When a carrier comes to your home, keep your dog inside, away from the door in another room.
- Dogs can be protective of their territory and may interpret the actions of letter carriers as a threat. Please take precautions when accepting mail in the presence of your pet.
- Spay or neuter your dog. Neutered dogs are less likely to roam and bite.
- Dogs that receive little attention or handling, or are left tied up for long periods of time, frequently turn into biters.

Loose Dogs Halt Delivery, Possibly Cause Trauma

The Postal Service places the safety of its employees as a top priority. Letter carriers fearing for their safety due to a loose or unrestrained pet may curtail delivery and ask homeowners to pick up their mail at the Post Office until the carrier is assured the pet is restrained. In cases where a carrier sees a dog roaming and can't discern where it resides, delivery could be curtailed to the entire neighborhood.

"Warm and wonderful relationships are shared between more than 72 million pet dogs and their owners in the United States," said Dr. Lori Teller, who serves on the AVMA's Animal Welfare Committee and is past president of the Texas VMA. "To protect those relationships, everyone must take responsibility for preventing dog bite injuries.

"Half of all children will be bitten by a dog by the time they're high school seniors," said Dr. John Fraser, of the Texas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. "It's so important for parents to supervise young children around dogs at all times, and it's just as important for children to be taught from an early age how to keep from being bitten."

"According to the ASPS, 32,961 reconstructive procedures to repair dog bites were performed in 2010, up 8 percent from 2009," explained Plastic surgeon Lior Heller, of the Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, who also represents the ASRM and ASMS. "Unfortunately, the majority of reconstructive surgeries to treat dog bites were performed on children who are frequently bitten on the face, which can result in severe lacerations, infection or scarring."

"Dog bite prevention education cannot begin early enough," said Kelly Voigt, 19, the victim of a savage dog attack when she was seven years old. She endured the pain of 100 stitches to her face as part of her recovery. The experience was the catalyst behind the creation of Prevent The Bite, a non-profit organization that promotes dog bite prevention to young children. To date, Voigt has spoken before more than 10,000 elementary school students.

To help educate the public about dog bites, the AVMA developed an online brochure: www.avma.org/press/publichealth/dogbite/mediakit.asp. The AVMA also maintains a dog bite prevention [facebook](#) page.

The Postal Service receives no tax dollars for operating expenses, and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations.

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A self-supporting government enterprise, the U.S. Postal Service is the only delivery service that reaches every address in the nation, 150 million residences, businesses and Post Office Boxes. The Postal Service receives no tax dollars for operating expenses, and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations. With 32,000 retail locations and the most frequently visited website in the federal government, usps.com, the Postal Service has annual revenue of more than \$67 billion and

delivers nearly 40 percent of the world's mail. If it were a private sector company, the U.S. Postal Service would rank 29th in the 2010 Fortune 500. Black Enterprise and Hispanic Business magazines ranked the Postal Service as a leader in workforce diversity. The Postal Service has been named the Most Trusted Government Agency six consecutive years and the sixth Most Trusted Business in the nation by the Ponemon Institute.

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