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National Dog Bite Prevention Week, May 19-26, 2007 ***'Don't let your dog bite the hand that serves you,' Postal Service Asks***

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A famous tall tale often heard by letter carriers is “don’t worry, my dog won’t bite.” Many of the more than three thousand plus postal employees attacked last year were bitten by pets that broke loose from their owner’s grip to jump through screen or glass doors.

Juan Barrios should know. He’s been attacked seven times during his 22-year postal career and nearly lost an eye when attacked by three dogs that escaped out the front door as their owner was getting the mail.

“The doctor told me the dog missed taking my eye out by millimeters,” recalled Barrios. “If it was a child or a senior citizen, they would have died.” Yet, 50 stitches later, he’s back on the job promoting responsible pet ownership. “Dog owners should do the right thing and keep their pets restrained when children or visitors come by.”

Barrios and other carriers from the Los Angeles area will recount their dog encounters and offer tips for avoiding dog bites Thursday, May 17 at 10:30 a.m. at the Long Beach, Calif. Post Office.

“Dogs serve as wonderful companions,” added Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald, Animal Planet’s “Emergency Vet,” and representative of the American Veterinary Medical Association, who will speak at Thursday’s event. “In certain situations, even the gentlest dog will bite.”

As part of its messaging to kick off National Dog Bite Prevention Week, May 19-26, the Postal Service is asking customers to place their pets in a separate room and close the door before accepting mail at their front door.

“Dogs are protective in nature and may perceive a letter carrier handing mail to its owner as a threat,” said USPS Vice President and Consumer Advocate Delores Killete. “For the same reason, the Postal Service asks parents to instruct their children to refrain from collecting mail from letter carriers in the presence of their pet.”

Last year, 3,184 letter carriers were bitten by dogs across the United States. Thanks to aggressive community outreach efforts with the American Veterinary Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and other organizations nationwide, 89 fewer letter carriers were victimized by dog attacks last year. But even one bite is one too many.

“Safety always comes first,” Killete continued. “If a letter carrier believes an unrestrained pet to be a threat, we may ask the customer to pick up his or her mail at the post office. If a pet roams a wide area, this may also result in the neighbors’ mail being curtailed. In these cases, we won’t resume delivery until the situation is safe.”

In the Orange County-Long Beach, Calif. area, postal employees suffered the most dog bites last year with 96, followed by Houston with 94, Sacramento with 82 and Los Angeles with 77.

Following are USPS dog bite statistics from fiscal years 2001 to 2006:

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Bites	3,158	3,070	3,743	3,429	3,273	3,184

The USPS is offering these tips for avoiding dog bites.

How to Avoid Being Bitten

- Don't run past a dog. The dog's natural instinct is to chase and catch prey.
- 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.
- While letter carriers are discouraged from petting animals, people who choose to pet dogs should always let a dog see and sniff them before petting the animal.
- If you believe a dog is about to attack, 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 dog in any situation.
- When a letter carrier comes to your home, keep your dog inside, away from the door, in another room.
- Don't let your child take mail from the letter carrier in the presence of your dog. Your dog's instinct is to protect the family.
- Spay or neuter your dog. Neutered dogs are less likely to bite. Humane Society of the United States statistics reflect that dogs that have not been spayed or neutered are up to three times more likely to be involved in a biting incident than neutered or spayed dogs.
- Dogs that haven't been properly socialized, receive little attention or handling, or are left tied up for long periods of time frequently turn into biters.

Detailed dog bite prevention information is available online as part of a postmaster's media kit at: <http://www.usps.com/cpim/ftp/bulletin/2007/html/pb22205/dogkit.3.1.html>. Additional information is available through the American Academy of Pediatrics at www.aap.org, the American Veterinary Medical Association at www.avma.org, The Humane Society of the United States at www.hsus.org, and the Prevent the Bite program at www.preventthebite.org. Media may obtain a broadcast quality audio news release by visiting <http://www.usps.com/communications/newsroom/allaudionews.htm>

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An independent federal agency, the Postal Service is the only delivery service that visits 146 million homes and businesses, six days a week. It has 37,000 retail locations and relies on the sale of postage, products, and services to cover its operating expenses. The Postal Service has annual revenues of \$73 billion and delivers nearly half the world's mail.