

No. 360/2018

21 June 2018

Our Ref: P18/18

## **RM Group/CWU Dog Awareness Week 2018 - Monday 25 June to Saturday 30 June:**

**To: All Branches with Postal Members  
All Regional Health and Safety Forums  
All Royal Mail Group Area Health and Safety Reps**

Dear Colleagues,

Royal Mail and the CWU will jointly launch the fifth annual Dog Awareness Week next Monday, which runs from Monday 25 June to Saturday 30 June 2018.

### **Aims of Dog Awareness Week:**

The week aims to raise awareness of the issue of dog attacks on postmen and women and encourage responsible dog ownership. Royal Mail Group and the CWU are once again working jointly on the campaign.

### **3000 Dog Attacks on Postmen & Women A Year:**

There are still around 3,000 dog attacks on postmen and women every year. Reported dog attacks have fallen by 8% over the previous year to around 2,280 but the CWU estimates that many minor incidents and attacks of approximately 1000 go unreported and another part of the campaign is to encourage outdoor delivery members and Parcelforce members to report ALL incidents with dogs because the next time it may not be a minor incident or near thing and could be serious. It is discovered too often following serious attacks, resulting in life changing injuries that several minor incidents and near misses were not properly reported and had they done, the serious attack may have been avoided. **Dog Attacks remain a major problem for the Royal Mail and Parcelforce Outdoor Workforce!**

### **7 Postmen and Women Attacked by Dogs Every Day:**

Based on the officially reported figures, seven postmen and women a day are attacked by dogs across the UK. This figure rises by 10% during the school holidays and in the summer months when parents and children are at home and family pets are allowed to roam properties and gardens without constraint or control, with front, back and side doors plus windows and side garden gates left open. We are now entering that time of the year when we see a spike in the number of dog attacks, hence the timing of Dog Awareness Week.

### **Research:**

Research released last year as part of Royal Mail's Dog Awareness Week found that nearly a third of UK parents who own a dog confessed that their canine has been loose in the house when an exterior door or windows were left open.

## **82% of Dog Attacks occur between the garden gate and front door.**

In the last year, 82% of Dog Attacks in total occurred between the garden gate and front door. At these times, dogs are more likely to be unrestrained or unsupervised in or around the property being delivered to.

## **Dog & Animal Charities and Organisations Supporting Dog Awareness Week:**

Royal Mail Group's Dog Awareness Week is supported by the Communications Workers Union and a wide range of organisations and animal charities including Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, Dogs Trust, Blue Cross, PDSA, RSPCA, the National Police Chief's Council and the National Dog Wardens Association.

## **Police Support:**

The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) are fully supporting the RMG/CWU Dog Awareness week again this year. The NPCC have been working in partnership with Royal Mail and the Communication Workers Union to use the new Dangerous Dogs Legislation (which the CWU achieved through the 'Bite-Back' Campaign) and the 'Postal Workers Service Level Agreement' (SLA), signed by RMG, CWU and NPCC to improve the safety of postal workers from dog attacks. In the Autumn of 2015, the Postal Workers SLA was piloted in 5 of the biggest Police forces in England; the Metropolitan, Merseyside, South and West Yorkshire and West Midlands, to try to understand the demand and any areas of improvement. The SLA has been a positive step forward in dealing with dog attacks and the NPCC is continuing to encourage Police forces nationally to utilise the tools available to them to tackle irresponsible dog ownership; by educating where possible and prosecuting where appropriate. Working together, Royal Mail Group, the Communication Workers Union and the National Police Chiefs' Council are currently in discussions to consider the rollout of an updated SLA nationally in England and Wales, to ensure Dog Attack incidents are dealt with consistently across all fifty Police forces. Further reports will be made to Branches in due course and subsequently discussions with Scottish and Northern Ireland Police forces will be discussed along similar lines if successful.

## **Territorial Aggression:**

Dogs can be quite protective of their owners and homes. They believe they are merely defending their territory, home and family, but it's important to recognise that this behaviour can sometimes escalate to dog bite incidents with anyone coming to a home, including postmen and women. No one should feel unsafe in the workplace and it's important dog owners realise this and act responsibly and comply with the law, that requires them to do just that. Owners must take the necessary steps to give postmen and women respect and safety from dog attacks. Owners should encourage good behaviour when postal workers come to make deliveries. Dog owners should be spending time getting their pets familiar with visitors coming to the house and so create a safer environment for all. The overwhelming majority of dogs that CWU members come into contact with do not present any problem at all but dogs are territorial and will defend themselves, their family and their territory if they feel it is being threatened.

Postmen and women deliver to over 29 million addresses across the country, six days a week and we want them to be vigilant, assess the situation, exercise caution and certainly take no risks when delivering the mail and parcels. This dog awareness week is also a campaign during summer time when we appeal to dog owners and their families to help reduce the numbers of attacks, particularly at the door and in the garden by securing and keeping control of their dogs and acting responsibly by taking a few simple precautions.

## **New Dog Control Laws:**

As Branches will be aware following the successful CWU Bite Back Campaign, the UK's Dangerous Dogs laws were extended and strengthened in Northern Ireland in 2010, Scotland in 2011 and England and Wales in 2014.

The new law provides us with a great opportunity to hold those responsible to account, tackle irresponsible dog ownership and ultimately improve the safety and confidence of Postal Workers and all members of our communities. The new dog control laws now identify and penalise chronically irresponsible dog owners. One owner from Romford, Essex paid fines and costs of nearly £9,000 after his dog injured a postwoman's fingers as she put letters through the door. Another owner from Oxford was handed a 16-month suspended prison sentence and banned from owning dogs for life after his dog badly injured a postman's hand. The penalties for dangerous dog offences can involve unlimited fines, prison sentences as well as dog destruction orders, dog ownership bans, compensation orders, and other ancillary orders. Dog owners need to fully understand that their actions usually are the cause of a dog being dangerous and simple precautions can prevent the pain for everyone concerned. No matter what breed of dog is involved, the dog can present a substantial danger to postal workers. Another aim of the week is to raise awareness of the new laws and the penalties dog owners risk facing if they fail to control their animals and an attack occurs.

### **Enforcement Issues**

The Health, Safety and Environment Department has been highlighting a number of enforcement issues and dog control law enforcement problems across the UK. This involves Police forces in England and Scotland, as well as Crown Prosecution bodies and the Courts. As a result of this, strong representations have been made to the UK Government, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government. Discussions are taking place, led by the CWU and supported by Royal Mail Group in an effort to achieve further changes to the law and sentencing protocol. The Union will also, via the National Officer, be giving evidence to a Dangerous Dogs Law Enquiry being conducted in the House of Commons by the EFRA Parliamentary Select Committee in the near future. Our objective is to achieve a post-implementation review of the current legislation and its enforcement and sentencing guidance in order to achieve further strengthening and improved outcomes for dangerous dogs prosecutions.

### **Dog Awareness Week Postmark:**

To help promote dog safety, a special Dog Awareness Week Postmark will be applied to all stamped items from Monday 25<sup>th</sup> June to Saturday 7 July 2018.

### **Area Safety Reps Dog Awareness Week Activity/Task Sheet:**

CWU ASR's will be fully involved in Dog Awareness Week and attached is a 5 day Activity/Task Sheet for ASRs to follow as a guide during Dog Awareness Week if they so wish. ASRs will work jointly with the local Royal Mail Safety, Health & Environment (SHE) Manager to select some of the units in the ASR's area with the highest number of dog attacks. Across the period of the week separate activities have been highlighted to compliment the activities sent to the unit managers. ASRs are asked to try and visit a different delivery office each day and inform the management team at that office that you will be attending to support the scheduled Dog Awareness Week activities. To assist ASRs, copies of the Manager's Dog Awareness Week Brief, Dog Awareness Week Newsflash, Dog Attack Risk Control Matrix, Dog Awareness Week Posters (internal version and external version) and letter to head teachers are all attached. ASRs should now be planning out the week and contacting the appropriate RMG SHE Advisor and relevant operational Managers for the units to be visited and safety inspected as part of the Dog Awareness Week actions. **Thanks for your support.**

### **Dog Awareness Week Activities:**

A wide range of other activities will also be taking place during Dog Awareness Week including:

- Royal Mail postmen and women speaking about their own experiences of dog attacks to the media.

- Dog Awareness posters will be in place in all Royal Mail workplaces for staff awareness raising and in Royal Mail enquiry offices giving dog owners tips on how they can help by keeping their dogs under control.
- Dog wardens will be visiting a number of Delivery Offices across the country giving dog safety talks to postmen and women.

## Top Ten Postcode Areas for Highest Number of Dog Attacks 2017-18

### Top Postcode Areas for Highest Number of Attacks

POSTCODE AREA	2017/2018 no. of attacks
BT	82
BN	63
PE	56
TN	49
PO	43
GU	42
S	42
CO	41
ME	41
AB	38

### Postcodes where attacks have risen

POSTCODE AREA	INCREASE ON LAST YEAR	No. of attacks 2016-17	No. of attacks 2017-18
TQ	475%	4	23
SK	75%	8	14
OL	73%	11	19
AL	67%	9	15
SL	63%	8	13
HP	63%	16	26
BB	60%	5	8
CO	58%	26	41
LL	57%	21	33
HU	56%	16	25

### Top Tips for Dog Owners:

Even the most friendly dog can be a danger to postal staff. Dogs are territorial by nature and if they feel they need to protect their family, they can become unpredictable.

Here are some ideas to help your postman deliver your post in safety:

- Ensure your dog is out of the way before the postman or woman arrives. Secure your dog in the back garden or a closed room.
- If you have a back garden, please close off the access, in case your dog could get round to the front when the postman calls.

- Dog attacks can happen when you've opened the door to sign for or collect an item which can't go through the letterbox. Please keep your dog in another room before answering the door and make sure children don't open the door, as dogs can push by them and attack.
- Give your dog some food or a toy to occupy them while your mail is being delivered.
- Wait 10 minutes after your mail has arrived before you let your pet back into your hallway. Check outside before letting the dog out to make sure the Postman or Woman has left and the gate is shut. Keep everything as calm and low-key as possible.
- If your dog likes to attack your mail consider installing a wire letter receptacle. It will protect your post, and your postman's fingers.
- If it's not practical for you to keep your dog away from a postman delivering your mail, please consider fitting a secure mailbox on the edge of your property.

## **Top Tips for Postmen & Women**

### **AVOID & STAY SAFE**

#### **AVOID:**

- A** – Avoid interacting with all dogs
- V** – Value yourself; don't put yourself at risk
- O** – Observe; keep your walk log up to date
- I** – Inform others of potential risk to stop them being attacked
- D** – Defend yourself if necessary, using your delivery equipment

***Speak to your manager or CWU rep to find out more.***

#### **STAY SAFE:**

- 82% of attacks happen at a customer's door or in their garden so take no risks
- Never put your fingers through a letterbox – use a posting peg
- If there's a gate to the property, rattle it and wait a few seconds to see if a dog is present. Listen and look for signs of a dog's presence, dog bed, toys, food & water bowls
- Never accept assurances – always ask owners to restrain their dogs and step away
- Use your pouch or trolley as a barrier between you and a dog, if approached unexpectedly
- Never tease or antagonise a dog
- Report all dogs on your duty via the WRAP system and check Walk Logs
- Under the revised Dangerous Dogs Act, postal workers have legal protection from dog attacks on private property
- If you are attacked, we urge you to report it, even minor incidents – first to your manager and then to the police. You could help stop future attacks happening

**Royal Mail Group and the CWU are committed to driving Dog Attack numbers down. We now have the law in place to do it but we need to get messages across to members;**

- **Firstly, don't take risks!**
- **Secondly, don't ignore minor incidents! - report it! It may be far worse next time!**
- **Thirdly, support investigations and prosecutions - too many injured members refuse to support prosecutions and give evidence, leaving dog owners guilty of criminal offences to get away scot-free!**

#### **IMPORTANT ATTACHMENTS:-**

- **Dog Awareness Week – Manager's Brief**
- **Stay Safe – Dog Attack Risk Control Matrix (From RMG SHE Std 2.7)**
- **Area Safety Reps Dog Awareness Week 2018 – Activity Guide Sheet**
- **Dog Awareness Week RM Colleague Update**

- **Dog Awareness Week Internal Poster – Scottish & Welsh versions of this poster will be sent to offices in Scotland and Wales**
- **Dog Awareness Week External Poster - Scottish & Welsh versions of this poster will be sent to offices in Scotland and Wales**
- **Dog Awareness Week Poster (Avoid)**
- **Letter to Head Teachers**

Yours sincerely



**Dave Joyce**  
**National Health, Safety & Environment Officer**

