

No. 356/2020

6 July 2020

Our Ref: P18/20

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

Dear Colleagues,

RM Group/CWU Dog Awareness Week 2020 – Monday 6 July to Saturday 11 July:

Introduction

Royal Mail and the CWU will jointly launch the eighth annual Dog Awareness Week on Monday 6 July, which runs until Saturday 11 July.

With the current Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic restrictions in place it is obviously difficult to be specific about the role and involvement of Area Health and Safety Reps and Workplace/Shift Health and Safety Reps this year. Over the previous seven years of Dog Awareness Week campaigns, CWU ASRs and WSRs have always played a key part in the annual joint campaigns. ASRs and WSRs are therefore asked to support the campaign and be as fully involved as best they can under the circumstances across the units in their branch, postcode area constituencies, ensuring full support for the campaign through local rep communication channels within Royal Mail Delivery Offices and Parcelforce Depots, checking compliance and working within current government Coronavirus Covid-19 guidance and Royal Mail Group risk control measures.

Attached are the key campaign materials to be used in the Royal Mail Group internal and external communication plan for your information, use and reference. This includes:

- Dog Awareness Week Communications Concurrence
- Dog Awareness Week SHE WTLL Huddle/Staff Briefing
- Dog Awareness Week RMTV "A.V.O.I.D" Screen Shots
- Dog Awareness Week Internal Campaign Poster (England, Scotland, Wales)
- Dog Awareness Week External Campaign Poster (England, Scotland, Wales)

Note: Hard copies of posters have been sent to all offices as appropriate.

The Royal Mail Group Safety Health & Environment Team have created a SharePoint site where the Dog Awareness Week Materials will go live on RMG internal viewing. The link is:

<https://intranet.royalmailgroup.com/HealthSafety/Pages/DogAwareness2020.aspx>

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.

Royal Mail Campaign Activities

Internal Communications:

- Plasma Screens – Internal plasma TV screens will be used to display key campaign messages particularly the 'AVOID' Message.
- Courier – Will carry an article on Dog Awareness Week as a feature in the June and July/August editions.
- RMTV – Will be featuring Dr Shaun Davis Global SHE Director talking about responsible dog ownership plus interviews with frontline employees.
- RM Radio – Will feature an interview with Dr Shaun Davis Global SHE Director on responsible dog ownership and RM Solicitor Michael Munn from the Legal team will be talking about the work they do to support prosecution. Freddie Warnock UK Operations Safety Health & Environment Strategic Business Partner will be interviewed on his experience in the business dealing with dog attacks and where RMG has come from as a business.
- Intranet Articles/Workplace/My Royal Mail – One story to feature each day on the intranet, stories will cover employees who have been bitten, the dog attack reporting process, interviews with dog behaviour specialists, police liaison officers, Dr Shaun Davis and Paddy O'Hara the Police Chiefs' Liaison Officer.
- Posters – Internal and External Posters to be made available on the SHE SharePoint and hard copies sent to units in time for display week beginning the 6th July.
- Payslips – Friday 3rd July will carry a Message to refer RMG staff to the campaign.
- Staff Briefings/Update – Managers will brief a message each day of the campaign.
- Internal SharePoint Site – All the information used in the campaign located in one place.

External Communications:

- Social Media – RMG will utilise Twitter and Facebook to send out messages advising dog owners what they can do to help reduce the risk of dog attacks on postal staff.
- Newspapers/TV/Radio – Press and Media interest in coverage has already begun to build and it is expected that there will be local, regional and national coverage in the press and on radio and TV with Dave Joyce CWU National Health, Safety and Environment Officer involved.
- Postage Mark on Letters – Referring customers to the RMG external website where there is guidance on what they can do as dog owners to help us carry out deliveries safely.

2,500 Dog Attacks on Postmen and Women A Year

There are still around 2,500 dog attacks on postmen and women every year. Reported dog attacks have increased by 7% over the last two years. The CWU Health, Safety and Environment Department estimates that many minor incidents and attacks of approximately 1000 go unreported and another part of the ongoing 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 with the same animal or at the same address were not properly reported and had they been, the serious attack may have been avoided. **Dog Attacks remain a major problem for the Royal Mail and Parcelforce Outdoor Workforce CWU members!**

7 Postmen and Women Attacked by Dogs Every Day – over 47 a week

Based on the officially reported figures, seven postmen and women a day are attacked by dogs across the UK. This figure rises 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. The events of the last 6 months however have changed the whole way in which UK society functions with lockdown.

Research

Research released in 2017 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 had been loose in the house when an exterior door or windows were left open.

83% of Dog Attacks occur between the garden gate and front door

83% of Dog Attacks in total occur between the garden gate and front door. At these times, in the summer as well, dogs are more likely to be unrestrained or unsupervised in or around the property being delivered to.

Dog and 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 PDSA, the National Police Chiefs' Council and the National Dog Wardens Association.

Police Support

The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) is 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). 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 wish to ensure Dog Attack incidents are dealt with consistently across all fifty Police forces.

The CWU is continuing its efforts through two national dangerous dogs inquiries by the UK Government and the Scottish Government as well as discussions with the Welsh Assembly to press for further strengthening of Dog Control Laws and enforcement of those laws.

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 30 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 £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. A third owner from Sheffield was jailed for four and a half months after his two dogs seriously mauled a postman who ended up in intensive care.

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 have taken 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 has also, via the National Health, Safety & Environment Officer, given evidence to the Dangerous Dogs Law Inquiry conducted in the House of Commons by the EFRA Parliamentary Select Committee and the Dangerous Dogs Law Inquiry conducted by the Scottish Parliament's Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee. Subsequently the National Health, Safety & Environment Officer has met the Scottish Minister, the Welsh Minister and a representative of the UK Minister. Our Union's 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 dog 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 6th July to Saturday 11th July 2020.

Top Tips for Dog Owners

CWU 150 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London, SW19 1RX
email: info@cwu.org Tel: 020 8971 7200 Fax: 020 8971 7300
General Secretary: Dave Ward

 [@DaveWardGS](https://twitter.com/DaveWardGS)  [Dave Ward CWU](https://www.facebook.com/DaveWardCWU)

RMG and the CWU will continue to promote advice to dog owning customers as 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 postman and women deliver the post safely. Please do what you can to promote these messages to the public:

- Ensure your dog is out of the way before the postman or woman arrives. Secure your dog in a secure closed room or the back garden.
- 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 when it comes through the letterbox, 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 Royal Mail and Parcelforce Outdoor Delivery and Collection members – would ASRs/WSRs promote and communicate these important messages:

“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

“STAY SAFE:”

- 83% 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 and 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 Communications Concurrence
- Dog Awareness Week SHE WTLL Huddle/Staff Briefing
- Dog Awareness Week RMTV "A.V.O.I.D" Screen Shots
- Dog Awareness Week Internal Campaign Poster (England, Scotland, Wales)
- Dog Awareness Week External Campaign Poster (England, Scotland, Wales)

Yours sincerely



Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer