



News Release

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MONDAY 6 JULY 2020**

ALMOST 2,500 DOG ATTACKS ON POSTAL WORKERS IN THE LAST YEAR

DESPITE SLIGHT DIP, ATTACKS STILL AVERAGING 47 PER WEEK

- 2,445 dog attacks have taken place on postmen and women across the UK in the last year
- Although the total number of attacks dipped slightly by 2% year on year, there are around 47 attacks taking place each week across the UK, with some leading to a permanent and disabling injury
- There has been a sharp increase in several postcode areas. For example, the 'G' Glasgow postcode saw attacks rise from 26 to 47 – an increase of 81% on last year
- There has been some progress. Areas trialling a virtual reality training package have seen a marked improvement in attack figures. Basildon Delivery Office in Essex saw the number of annual attacks drop from 9 down to 2
- To raise further awareness, Royal Mail's eighth annual Dog Awareness Week launches today and runs until 12 July to encourage responsible dog ownership
- This year Royal Mail has partnered with dog behavioural expert, Leon Towers, to provide tips and advice for dog owners on problematic dog behaviour patterns
- In the last year, over 1,600 (78%) of dog attacks on postal workers happened at the front door, in the garden or in the street. We are appealing to all dog owners to 'THINK TWICE' when they open the door as the postman or postwoman calls
- Royal Mail knows that dogs are not inherently dangerous. But, even the most placid animal can be prone to attack if it feels it or its territory is being threatened.
- A special Dog Awareness Week postmark will be applied to all stamped items from Monday 6 July to Saturday 11 July 2020

There were just under 2,500 dog attacks on Royal Mail's postmen and women last year with 2,445 separate incidents reported compared to 2,496 in 2018-19.

Although the 2019/2020 figures represent a slight but welcome 2% dip, this still equates to around 47 attacks every week across the UK, with some leading to a permanent and disabling injury.

In several postcode areas the number of attacks has climbed steeply. In the Glasgow "G" postcode alone, attacks on postmen and postwomen have almost doubled from 26 to 47 attacks annually (up 83%), while the Chelmsford postcode "CH" has seen attacks increase more than 122%, rising from 15 to 33.

However, some areas which have trialled a special Virtual Reality training package have seen a marked improvement in attack figures. Basildon Delivery Office (DO) in Essex for example saw the number of annual attacks drop from 9 down to 2, while Southend and Malden DOs saw attacks drop from 12 to 8 and from 8 to 6 respectively.

The Virtual Reality (VR) technology enables postmen and postwomen to become fully immersed in a photo-realistic, delivery environment to see how they would react to the threat of a dog attack. Under the programme, colleagues use a special VR headset and step into a realistic virtual scenario where they are asked to assess relevant cues that a dog may be present. They are then tested on whether they are performing all the correct steps during their delivery to ensure their safety. Royal Mail now plans to roll out this training on a wider scale across the business.

As Royal Mail launches its eighth successive Dog Awareness Week, the company is appealing to dog owners to ensure they understand the often devastating impact of dog attacks on postmen and women and take proper measures to ensure their pets pose no threat to postal workers through responsible dog ownership.

Royal Mail knows that dogs are not inherently dangerous. But, even the most placid animal can be prone to attack if it feels either it or its territory is being threatened. This year Royal Mail has partnered with dog behavioural expert, Leon Towers, to provide tips and advice for dog owners on problematic dog behaviour patterns

In the last year, over 1,600 (78%) of dog attacks on postal workers happened at the front door, in the garden or in the street. We are appealing to all dog owners to 'think TWICE' when they open the door as the postman or postwoman calls.

In total, there were 1,622 days of absence in 2019/20 due to attacks on Royal Mail staff – the longest period of absence being 99 days.

Royal Mail is committed to ensuring the welfare and safety of our people who provide a valuable service to our customers across the length and breadth of the UK and in every community.

A postman's experience:

Mark Wilding, a postman for 15 years, from, Llandrindod Wells, Wales was out on his round when he was attacked by a dog in the garden of a customer's property.

Mark said: "I was delivering to a property in a cul-de-sac. As I walked up the path, I heard some shouting. I looked up, and saw a dog appear from behind a car and run towards me. I could see it wasn't a friendly approach. I used my mail pouch to try and fend the dog off while the owner raced to control it. While trying to protect myself, the dog jumped up and bit me on my hand. It then started biting my hi-viz jacket and my trousers. Eventually the owner managed to drag the dog off me and get it into his house. My hand wouldn't stop bleeding, so I had to go to hospital.

"Although the wound wasn't very deep, it was very frightening at the time, because the dog just kept attacking and wouldn't stop.

"I would like to ask all dog-owning customers to be aware of potential situations that might cause your dog to attack. It could easily have been a small child and the outcome could have been so much worse."

Raising Awareness:

Dr Shaun Davis, Royal Mail Group Global Director of Safety, Health, Wellbeing & Sustainability

said: “The safety of our people is of paramount importance and never more so than now as we continue to support the communities we live and work in. The coronavirus pandemic has placed an increasing reliance on our people to bring much needed supplies to and from our customers’ homes and businesses. I am pleased to see a slight decrease this year, however it is still an alarmingly high number. 47 dog attacks per week means seven per day over a six day working week. This continues to be a figure we must focus on reducing, and we ask our customers to help us with this as they have done to date.”

Dog behavioural expert, Leon Towers, said: “Our dogs don’t mean to be mean when postal workers come calling, but guarding their territory is a natural instinct for many. But a few simple things to consider in advance can ensure everyone remains safe and our furry friends don’t act in an unwelcome way through no fault of their own. Just make sure they are not in an area like the entrance hall, entrance gate or front garden, which they feel is theirs to guard when someone knocks on the door; make sure they are mentally stimulated regularly - and especially at times when the post is due to arrive.”

Communication Workers Union, National Health and Safety Officer Dave Joyce said: “We are appealing to all customers who are dog owners to work with us and ‘think TWICE’ when the postman calls. Put the dog away in a secure room before opening the door to collect deliveries.”

Legal Prosecutions:

Following the changes to the Dangerous Dog Act in England and Wales that came into force in May 2014, Royal Mail has commenced over 20 private prosecutions against dog owners where the police have failed to take the appropriate action. This has punished offenders, further raised awareness, which in turn will prevent further attacks by forcing owners to put in place control measures to ensure a dog does not attack again.

We have also launched two actions in the High Court to settle the law in relation to the criminal liability of dog owners when postal workers have their fingers bitten when posting items through a letterbox. These cases will clarify the law in this area, and, if successful, will force dog owners to take positive steps - such as fixing a letterbox guard or keeping the dog away from the letterbox at all times - in order to prevent some of the terrible injuries suffered by our colleagues.

To help promote dog safety, a special Dog Awareness Week postmark will be applied to all stamped items from Monday 6 July to Saturday 11 July 2020.

Please visit www.royalmail.com/dogawareness for hints and tips on dog safety.

Ends

For further information, contact:

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Notes to editors:**Highest Number of attacks by postcode area:**

POSTCODE AREA	2019/2020 No. of attacks
BT	76
S	64
PO	63
BN	52
TN	51
G	49
EX	48
G	47
CM	44
RH	42

POSTCODE AREA	2018/2019 No. of attacks
BN	65
BT	63
S	60
NG	54
PO	52
G	48
RH	48
B	45
LS	44
PE	44

Highest year-on-year increase in attacks by postcode area:

RANK	POSTCODE AREA	INCREASE ON LAST YEAR	No. of attacks 2018/2019	No. of attacks 2019/2020
=1	IG	400%	1	5
=1	SM	400%	1	5
2	SR	200%	3	9
=3	ML	122%	9	20
=3	WN	122%	9	20
4	CH	120%	15	33
5	SE	107%	15	31
=6	DY	83%	6	11
=6	LA	83%	6	11
=7	AL	82%	11	20
=7	DT	82%	11	20

8	G	81%	26	47
9	LL	71%	14	24
10	CF	65%	23	38

Top Tips for Dog Owners

Even the most lovable 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. Place your pet in the back garden or a faraway room.
- If you have a back garden, please close off the access, in case your dog could get around to the front when the postman calls.
- Dog attacks can happen when you've opened the door to sign for an item. 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 to let your pet back into your hallway. 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 or postwoman's fingers
- If it's not practical for you to keep your dog away from a postman or postwoman delivering your mail, please consider fitting a secure mailbox on the edge of your property.
- Please ensure your dog is microchipped, wearing a collar and tag, and that your contact details on the tag and microchip are up to date.

About Royal Mail plc

Royal Mail plc is the parent company of Royal Mail Group Limited, the leading provider of postal and delivery services in the UK and the UK's designated universal postal service provider. UK Parcels, International and Letters ("UKPIL") comprises the company's UK and international parcels and letters delivery businesses operating under the "Royal Mail" and "Parcelforce Worldwide" brands. Through the Royal Mail Core Network, the company delivers a one-price-goes-anywhere service on a range of parcels and letters products. Royal Mail has the capability to deliver to around 30 million addresses in the UK, six days a week (excluding UK public holidays). Parcelforce Worldwide operates a separate UK network which collects and delivers express parcels. Royal Mail also owns General Logistics Systems (GLS) which operates one of the largest ground-based, deferred parcel delivery networks in Europe.