



LOCAL NEWS

Are pets or pet owners to blame when dogs attack? 🐕

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By Brad Woodard / 11 News

It could be any morning at any post office. Like performers in a well-choreographed production, letter carriers sort out the mail and suit up for battle.

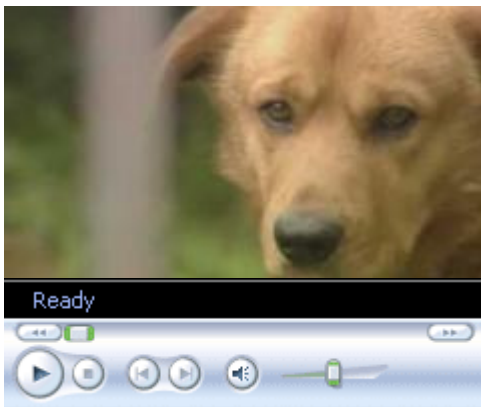
But they're not preparing to battle rain, sleet, snow or dark of night. They're getting ready for the dogs.

"A dog will stop the mail immediately. You're not going to risk your well being for a dog that's out. It's just not logical," letter carrier Mark Flowers said.

As fate would have it, man's best friend is the letter carriers greatest foe [Also online](#) in Houston – the city ranked first and second in the past two years for number of carriers attacked.

[Do you live in a dog bite zone? Click here to find out!](#)

"How they got out, I'm not sure," Flowers said of a personal experience with dogs on the job. "But when I looked up there they were. They ripped my pants."



Houston has a dog bite problem

Almost every letter carrier that's ever been on a route in Houston has been either threatened or bitten by a dog.

Some of them escape with minor cuts and bruises, but others are injured for life.

In fact, more people in Texas are killed every year by dog bites than by snakes.

It's a serious problem, and not just for postal workers.

According to the city's dog bite records for the last three years, there were 6,700 reported bites.

Only 600 of those attacks were attributed to strays. That means more than 6,000 of those dangerous dogs had owners.

And some say those owners should be held responsible.

"These aren't dogs just running wild on the streets. They're running on the streets, but they're not wild. After they go out on their own and they bite people and dump garbage cans and cause accidents and all kinds of stuff. Then they go home and get a little pat on their head and a little treat and all is well," BARC's Kent Roberts said.

Of all the zip codes covered by Houston's Bureau of Animal Regulation and Control, 77026 on the city's north side is responsible for the most calls – and the most bites.

But why?



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"It has the highest number of irresponsible pet owners who are allowing their animals to run loose," Roberts said.

Surprisingly to some, shepherd and lab mixes accounted for more bites than pit bulls and pit bull mixes combined.

But it's not just the infamous breeds that attack – any dog can bite.

The month of May traditionally has the most bites, and nearly 1,300 of the victims in the three year period were aged ten and under.

Regardless of age, experts say if you have an encounter with a potentially dangerous dog, don't run.

"That's the worst thing you can do. It triggers in that dog what it's programmed to do," Roberts said.

Instead, experts suggest you avoid eye contact and gently ease away.

And if that's not possible?

"You stand like a tree or drop like a rock. And roll up and protect your vitals. Sometimes you can't drop. Stand like a tree and stand still and the dog will sniff and hopefully go away," Roberts said.

When it comes to dog bites, there's no doubt Houston has a problem, but the problem may not be with the dogs themselves.

According to some, the problem is with the people unwilling to take responsibility for their pets and their actions.