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## Police dog bites handler, two others

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*The Desert Sun*

The Palm Springs Police Department is conducting an internal investigation after a police dog on Tuesday bit its handler and injured two Riverside County employees.

The "recently acquired" Belgian shepherd got out of a parked police car just after 9 a.m. while its handler was trying to give it water, officials said.

It ran toward two women, identified only as county employees, as they stood in a parking lot in the 3000 block of E. Tahquitz Canyon Way, official said.

The dog scratched one of the employees' arms and "nipped" the other one on her shoulder, police Sgt. Mitch Spike said.

The dog's handler tried to subdue the dog and managed to get it back into the vehicle, but not before suffering a bite to his hand, officials said.

"This is very early in the training process," Spike said. "They are not aggressive animals. I'm sure he just didn't understand. It's considered playtime."

The handler was treated at Desert Regional Medical Center and released. He will take an unspecified amount of time off from work to heal, Spike said.

One of the women went to Eisenhower Medical Center in Rancho Mirage for treatment.

Her condition was not available, Riverside County spokesman Raymond Smith said.

No word on whether the second female received medical treatment.

Spike said it's too early to tell if the dog will be kept. Police dogs are usually between 1 and 3 years old when acquired for law enforcement training, he added.

The Indio Police Department's training process for its K-9 unit takes several months and costs as much as \$17,000, department spokesman Ben Guitron said Tuesday.

The agency works with Banning-based Work Dogs International to find police dogs from such countries as Germany, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

A handler brings the dog home so the dog becomes familiar with the handler before undergoing a 10-week development process that includes obedience, building search and apprehension training.

The Indio Police Department hasn't had any incidents such as the one in Palm Springs.

If it did, the department also would conduct an internal investigation and place the dog on a leave of absence.