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Lakeland Police Dog Bites Girl, 15

K-9 got out of car when the release device was tripped by accident.

By [Shoshana Walter](#)
The Ledger

LAKELAND | A 15-year-old girl was bitten Friday morning by a Lakeland police K-9 after the device that releases the dog from a patrol car was accidentally triggered, Lakeland police said.

Shakeria Smiley, 15, of Lakeland was released from Lakeland Regional Medical Center on Friday afternoon with minor injuries, police said, plus a pair of crutches, six stitches and several pesky blood stains on her blue jeans, according to Smiley.

Two Lakeland police officers, including officer Ted Sealey who handles the K-9 Bodo, had gone to an apartment building at 1440 1/2 Lincoln Ave. about 8:30 a.m. to mediate a landlord-tenant dispute, said police spokesman Jack Gillen.

Smiley was visiting her mother, who lives there, said Larry Hardaway, Smiley's lawyer.

During the argument, someone accidentally hit Sealey's chest, triggering the device that releases the dog.

Bodo bounded onto the street from the back driver's side door and raced toward Sealey, Gillen said. In his path was Smiley, leaning against another patrol car parked on the street.

"The dogs are trained to go to their handler to protect them," Gillen said.

Hardaway said Bodo bit down on Smiley's thigh twice.

Bodo was removed almost immediately, said Gillen, but Smiley recalled a long period of intense pain as Sealey commanded the dog and attempted to remove him from her leg.

"It just scared me so bad," Smiley said. "I thought I was going to lose my leg."

There are conflicting accounts of how the device that released Bodo was triggered and why officers were at the building to begin with.

Hardaway said the landlord contacted authorities after Smiley's mother claimed there were code

violations in her apartment. Gillen said the landlord wanted police to help mediate an eviction dispute with a tenant.

Hardaway said the device that released Bodo was triggered when Sealey reached over to calm someone down. Lakeland police said a woman accidentally hit the officer's chest while gesturing during an argument.

The "deployment device" was in an inside pocket against the officer's chest, Gillen said. The devices, which are like small garage door openers, are carried by all K-9 handlers and are meant to be easy to trigger in case of an emergency, Gillen said. Each handler carries them in a different place.

"I don't believe any changes will be employed because of this," he said. "The dog was doing what it was trained to do. The girl was unfortunately in the wrong place at the wrong time. This was a freak accident."

Bodo is an experienced Lakeland police dog, Gillen said. Later Friday, he aided Sealey in a drug case by inspecting a car. Last week he helped stop a suspect fleeing from the scene of a high-speed chase after ripping off his pants near the Macaroni Grill on Harden Boulevard in Lakeland.

Smiley, a freshman at Lake Gibson High School, said she's been afraid of dogs since she was 5 when she tried to pet a dog and it tried to bite her.

"It was probably very scary for her," said Police Chief Roger Boatner. "I certainly think it was an unfortunate incident. I don't think anything malicious was being done."

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