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## Dog attacks postman in Alfreton

07:30 - 16-July-2008

A POSTMAN who had 21 stitches to his neck and face after being savaged by a dog has spoken of his ordeal.

Father-of three Phil Stone was attacked by a German Shepherd while delivering mail, in Riddings.

The dog, which was not on a lead, jumped up and grabbed Mr Stone by the neck and face.

The Royal Mail worker said: "I saw the dog walk out on to the pavement.

"It circled me, then without barking or snarling just launched itself at my face.

"I could feel its teeth tearing into my skin and my first thought was that it was going to kill me."

He battled the animal and managed to kick it away and it was grabbed by its owner who called an ambulance.

Mr Stone, 55, was taken to the Derbyshire Royal Infirmary, where his injuries were treated after the attack in February last year.

He said: "The doctor that treated me, and the policemen who went with me to the hospital, said the cuts in my face were so deep they could see my jawbone.

"My wife and son were called to the hospital, not knowing what had happened to me, and when they saw the state of my face they were just horrified.

"The attack happened at about 8.15am and it wasn't until 1.30pm that the doctor finished treating me."

Mr Stone, who was off work for eight weeks following the attack, also attended counselling sessions which encouraged him to talk about the attack.

Now, he is urging animal owners to act responsibly in the wake of a sharp rise in the number of attacks on postal staff across the East Midlands.

Royal Mail say it is a particular problem during the school holidays, when parents and children are at home, and dogs are allowed unsupervised in the garden or out on to the streets.

According to Royal Mail, there were 27 dog attacks on delivery staff, in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire postcode areas last summer, up from 18 during school holidays in 2006.

Mr Stone's manager, Ian Nightingale, believed it was his employee's build which helped save his life.

He said: "If it was not for his size and strength I think I would have been dealing with a death. The bite was about an inch from the jugular vein."

In court, the dog's owner pleaded guilty to possessing a dangerous dog, but the judge ruled it did not need to be put down – a decision that has angered Mr Stone.

He said: "I am 5ft 10in tall and weigh 14 stone.

"I just dread to think what would have happened had it been a child that was attacked."

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