

Safety and health alert

18/01 Sub-contractor unknowingly provokes serious dog attack

Incident

A sub-contractor working to install cable television at a private residence was attacked by the homeowner's dog. The sub-contractor received serious injuries to the face and trunk which required plastic surgery.

Factors

- The sub-contractor was not experienced in training or handling dogs. During the installation process, the sub-contractor made eye contact with the dog and pointed at it. The dog regarded this as a challenge and attacked. The sub-contractor did not have the training or experience to anticipate such a reaction.
- The main contractor did not have policies, procedures or training programs in place to ensure that its employees were trained to deal with hazards arising from field staff encountering aggressive dogs.

Recommendations

All employers of staff likely to encounter dogs or other potentially aggressive animals as part of their normal work duties should ensure that:

- policies and procedures are in place that require, as far as practicable, that such animals be removed from the work area before work commences; and
- training and induction programs include training in how to interact with such animals in a safe manner. In particular, with respect to dogs, employees should be made aware that:
 - dogs will act to protect human and non-human members of their household from perceived threats;
 - children may release dogs previously thought to have been excluded from the work area; and
 - they should never point at a dog in a manner that the dog may perceive as a threat to its owner or itself.

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au, or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: safety@docep.wa.gov.au.

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