

Dog Bite Prevention Training Helps Meter Readers

Annual number of dog bites significantly reduced after company begins dog bite prevention training.

Posted: April 21, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

Commonwealth Edison Co. meter readers in the Chicago area have seen a 90 percent decrease in the number of dog bites as a result of improved safety policies and the type of training meter readers received from experts in dog bite prevention.

ComEd says the number of dog bites its meter readers have received has steadily dropped since 1998, when 125 incidents occurred. In 2006, the number was just 12.

Meter readers throughout ComEd's service territory receive annual dog bite prevention training from experts in the field. Training sessions were held last week in Chicago, Joliet, Oak Brook and Rockford.

Training included live dog attack demonstrations to show meter readers what to do when a dog attacks. Meter readers were also taught how to avoid attacks, what makes dogs aggressive and how to use protective devices like dog spray and an umbrella.

When an umbrella is opened, it causes most dogs to pause, and it provides a safe zone between the dog and the meter reader.

New safety policies that ComEd has instituted since 1998 include making an umbrella required meter reading equipment and asking meter readers not to enter a property where a dog is outside, either leashed or unleashed. If meter readers see a dog outside while trying to read a meter, an attempt should be made to get the owner to bring the dog inside.

"Customers will provide a benefit to themselves and our meter readers if they have their dogs inside when we attempt to read the meters. We won't read the meter if the dog is outside," ComEd meter reading manager Bill Neutz said.

"As a result of the reduced number of incidents, our meter readers can accurately read more meters in a timely fashion. We also keep our costs as low as possible as a result of minimizing injuries and lost time in the field," Neutz said.

Dogs are the most prevalent hazard meter readers face. Some readers can see over 100 dogs a day on their route, according to ComEd.