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***RESPONSIBILITIES OF A DOG OWNER
AND
THE DOG ATTACK GUIDE***

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A DOG OWNER

Registration and Licenses:

Massachusetts law requires the owner or keeper of a dog to register, number, describe, and license his or her dog with the town/city clerk.

The owner/keeper must provide proof that the dog has been vaccinated as a requirement for issuance of the license, and the license must be displayed on the dog's collar.

Any violation of the registration and license statute could result in a \$25.00 fine and/or criminal charges.

Insurance:

It is absolutely essential for every dog owner to have a homeowner's or renter's insurance policy which will protect them in the event their dog attacks or bites someone.

Some breeds are excluded by the insurance companies. Your homeowner's or renter's application or renewal form now contains a specific question as to dogs. Make sure you disclose all details or the insurance company will disclaim (deny) coverage.

If you are not insured and your dog causes injury to another, you will be required to pay for all damages personally. Your personal assets could become subject to attachment and levy.

Vicious and/or Barking Dog:

Complaints can be made against the owner/keeper of a dog for excessive barking or nuisance by reason of vicious disposition. The owner/keeper could be subject to fine or forfeiture of the dog. Most towns have ordinances which require to control your dog or face penalties.

Cruelty to Dogs:

Massachusetts has recently toughened its laws with regard to cruelty to animals, a criminal offense. A conviction could result in a state prison sentence of up to 5 years, house of correction sentence of up to 2½ years and/or a fine of up to \$2,500.00. You can be charged with cruelty if you fail to provide food, water, and shelter for your dog or animal.

Leash Law

Almost every community has leash laws which require you to leash your dog. If you fail to obey the leash law, civil fines and penalties may be imposed.

Even if you only keep someone's dog for a week or so while on vacation or at work you are just as responsible for injuries or damages caused as if you were the owner.

THE DOG ATTACK GUIDE

Liability for Damage Caused by Your Dog:

You, the owner/keeper of a dog, are generally strictly liable for any bodily injury or property damage caused by your dog.

The only defense to a dog attack or bite is if the person claiming injury or damage was trespassing or teasing, tormenting, or abusing your dog.

Negligent Infliction of Emotional Distress:

Claims can be made against you by a parent or spouse who witnessed the dog attack or by their children or spouse who came onto the scene or went to the hospital immediately after the attack and have suffered emotional distress as a result.

Damages:

The injured party can bring a claim for his or her:

1. Medical expenses including counseling, if needed.
2. Lost wages or inability to earn wages – past, present, and future.
3. Pain – past, present, and future (both physical and mental).
4. Any permanent scarring or disfigurement.
5. Any permanent loss of bodily function.

Triple Damages:

If you, the owner/keeper of a dog, have been previously ordered to restrain the dog and such dog causes bodily injury, you can be liable to the injured party for triple the amount of personal injury or property damage.

Representation:

If you or a loved one has been injured by a dog, it is in your best interest to contact an attorney immediately to protect you. These matters are handled on a contingent fee basis so that you are not charged until a recovery is made.