



PILOT DOGS IN THE WORKPLACE

The purpose of this lecture is to discuss considerations for having a Pilot Dog in the workplace and to provide suggestions for introducing your Pilot Dog to your working environment. This lesson includes:

- Preparing your workplace prior to the arrival of your Pilot Dog
- Introducing your Pilot Dog to your workplace and co-workers
- Managing your Pilot Dog throughout the work day
- Maintaining your Pilot Dog's professional appearance and behavior

Preparing Your Workplace Prior to the Arrival of Your Pilot Dog

The more preparation you can do prior to returning to work with your new dog, the less stressful your transition will be.

- You should inform both your supervisor and your co-workers that you will be bringing a new Pilot Dog into the workplace.
 - If this is your first Pilot Dog, be aware that many people have never been around a working dog before and do not know what types of interactions are appropriate.
 - In small offices, you may be able to talk to each person individually, but in larger companies it may be worthwhile to send out a company-wide email explaining expectations of co-workers on how to interact with your new guide dog.
- A second part of preparation is physically preparing a place for your dog at or close to your workstation. In most workplaces, you will have to leave the dog occasionally to perform work functions and you will want him to be safe when you aren't physically holding the leash.
 - When choosing an appropriate place for the dog, consider pedestrian traffic, carts, machinery, noise, chemicals, and other debris. Keep the dog as far as possible from these things.

- If there is room for a crate, that would be ideal. You should remove your dog's harness if he is going to be crated, and may want to put a sign on the crate saying "Please Do Not Pet or Feed."
- If there is not room for a crate, you can use a tie-down attached to a heavy piece of furniture. Please remove the dog's harness once the dog is on the tie-down at your workstation.
- You should also discuss with your supervisor where the best place is to relieve your dog.
 - Factors to keep in mind include distance from your workstation and proximity to a trash can.
 - Remember that it is always your responsibility, not your employer's, to keep the relief area clean.

Introducing Your Pilot Dog to your Workplace and Co-Workers

- Ideally, your dog's first visit to your workplace will take place on a day you don't have to work. This will allow you time to thoroughly familiarize the dog to the new environment without the distraction of work responsibilities.
- If the route to your workstation is very complex, you may want to seek assistance in patterning your dog prior to your first day back at work.
- It is a good idea to give yourself extra time to get to work on your first day back. This will allow time to work through any minor areas of confusion and rework any guidework errors.
- Ideally, your co-workers should ignore your dog. This will be easier if you have explained beforehand that your new dog can be easily distracted and must be able to focus on the job, especially when learning a new environment.
 - It is a personal choice whether you want to allow your supervisor or a few co-workers who share your workspace to briefly greet the dog. No one should be allowed to touch your dog without permission, and no one should be allowed to feed, play with, or walk your dog at work.
 - You will have to be assertive in setting and maintaining appropriate boundaries, and do not be afraid to bring up concerns to your supervisor if someone in the

office is repeatedly interfering with your dog, even after being politely asked to stop.

Managing Your Pilot Dog Throughout the Work Day

- Most dogs adapt very easily to human work schedules. The routine of a work day is ideal for many dogs.
- A little exercise in the morning from your commute to work will help him to be calm and quiet at work.
- Remember to give your dog sufficient relief times throughout the work day. Many people relieve their dogs when they get to work, at lunch, and when they leave work, but some dogs may need additional relief times.
- You should also provide the dog access to water during the work day.
- You should make arrangements with a supervisor or a co-worker as to what will happen with your dog should you become ill or have an accident.
 - In many cases, dogs have been allowed to ride in an ambulance with a conscious handler, but there should also be a backup plan.
 - With the many variables that can arise in an emergency, it is in everyone's best interests to plan ahead.
- It is a good idea to ask your supervisor if you can be notified prior to an unannounced fire drill. Fire alarms can be extremely loud and potentially traumatic for a dog, and early notification would allow you to prepare yourself and your dog appropriately.

Maintaining Your Pilot Dog's Professional Appearance and Behavior

While all Pilot Dogs need to be clean, well-groomed, and well-behaved, these things are especially important in the workplace.

- As a courtesy to your employer, keep your Pilot Dog well-groomed to minimize shedding.
- You should also be aware of any unpleasant odor, whether from ears, a dirty coat, anal glands, or some other source. Address any issues promptly with your veterinarian. A smelly dog in the workplace is unprofessional.
- Professional behavior is also very important. You are responsible for keeping your dog under control at all times.

- You should never let your dog wander the office freely and interact with co-workers, even if they encourage you to do so.
- If you need to correct your dog, you should do so as discreetly as possible, and always make sure to give sincere praise as soon as the dog resumes correct behavior so that your co-workers know you are not angry with the dog.
- Remember that your dog is a reflection of you, and keeping your dog well-groomed and under good control will ensure that he will be welcome in your workplace.