

PRESS RELEASE

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Editor note: Staff will not be available for interviews. Press may contact the zoo's PR team to arrange a time for b-roll on Monday during business hours.

Animal keeper sustains bite to hand from orangutan

SEATTLE—Yesterday an animal keeper at Woodland Park Zoo sustained a serious injury to the hand after being bitten through a mesh barrier by one of the zoo's orangutans during a routine training session. The keeper was immediately transported to the hospital, where they received treatment.

For the privacy of the staff member, the zoo is not releasing specific details of the non-life threatening injury.

The zoo practices protected contact with all its orangutans, which means there is a physical barrier—such as fencing or mesh—between staff and animals at all times. Throughout the incident, the orangutan remained secured in the habitat and no other staff or guests were involved, injured or at risk.

The zoo's animal care team engages in regular training sessions with many species, including orangutans, as part of their daily routine. "Training encourages the animals to voluntarily participate in their own care by helping them become more comfortable with daily husbandry and medical procedures. Training sessions also foster strong bonds that build trust between the animals and their keepers, and it is always a voluntary and enriching part of their daily care," explained Dr. Luis Neves, Senior Director of Animal Care at Woodland Park Zoo.

A Woodland Park Zoo veterinarian immediately responded and conducted a visual exam on the orangutan involved and confirmed that the animal is safe, unharmed and behaving appropriately. "The orangutan care team will continue to provide training and routine care for each orangutan to maintain normalcy and will closely monitor the animals," added Neves.

The zoo is conducting a thorough investigation into how this incident occurred so that it can continue to prioritize staff safety. The zoo's animal care managers will also carefully evaluate the protected contact barriers to determine whether any modifications are necessary.

"We are very saddened our team member was injured and know this has been a very stressful and difficult experience for them and the rest of our Animal Care team. We are in contact with the animal keeper and will do all we can to support them as they heal," said Alejandro Grajal, President and CEO at Woodland Park Zoo.

The zoo's People & Culture team has made emotional support counseling available to the orangutan care team as well as other staff across the zoo.

There are currently four adult orangutans living at the zoo. The orangutan habitat in Trail of Vines remains open to guests during zoo hours.

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