

HOMELIFE



Surviving a HOME renovation

BY SUSAN MCCULLOUGH

4 tips to make the transition easier on your dog.

We had some work done on our home last year, and I love the results.

Instead of fighting a losing battle to keep carpets clean, I just wipe away the muddy paw prints that our Golden Retriever Allie sometimes leaves on our new laminate flooring. And instead of scrubbing mildew out of the grout, we shower in a stall that spots an easy-to-clean bath area.

Of course, we knew that conditions here would be chaotic while the work was being done. I was especially concerned about how Allie would fare.

Certified applied animal behaviorist Mary Lee Nisichke thinks my concern was justified. "My case files show an increase of dog bites to humans surrounding or during the time of construction work," says Nisichke, who lives in Portland, Ore. "There are non-normal noises of all types, unusual smells, unfamiliar people who are often carrying weird objects — by the dog's definition — and avoiding or intruding into their space."

To ease your dog's worries, as well as your own, consider taking these steps when you decide to give your home a makeover:

1. Counter the chaos. If you plan to keep your dog at home, consider using a calming agent to counteract the stressful noises, sights, and smells she'll encounter. Nisichke recommends the plug-in unit **Calming Zone** with DAB (www.furpup.com), which mimics the calming, soothing hormones secreted by mother dogs after puppies are born. "I would have one in place before the construction begins, in a room where the dog feels safe," Nisichke says.

2. Protect the workers. A friendly dog might enjoy accompanying you to greet the workers — especially

if those workers give her a treat or two — but letting your dog interact with the workers on her own is a bad idea. "I would never allow the dog to greet unfamiliar workers or be loose with the workers when they are inside the living premises or in the yard unattended," Nisichke warns. "These are the highest probability bite situations, but clearly understandable reasons."

3. Clean up. When the workers finish each day, make sure that they've removed all items that could endanger your dog — and if they haven't, do so yourself. Melissa Shyan-Norwitz, a certified applied animal behaviorist in Cambridge City, Ind., recommends looking for nails, paint, or any other potentially harmful items, and putting them beyond your dog's reach. Make sure, too, that all doors and gates are closed.

4. Vacate the premises. If the job requires the workers to constantly enter and exit the house — or if you otherwise think your dog would suffer stress, like her counterpart Zeb: "If you have a responsible daycare or pet care facility, this might be a good time for your dog to visit there," Nisichke says.

I decided that Allie would be better off away from our house during its mini-renovation, and took her to a local doggie daycare. I was glad not to have to worry about her, and she came home each day acting calm and mellow.

Taking Allie elsewhere helped as all survive our home's little makeover, and we've been thriving ever since. □

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