

## ***Dogs, the Leash of our Worries***

*By Jay Johnson*

*As you know, we are required by the Park to place dogs on leashes when outside of our homes, and you likely know that this is an issue of safety. All dog leashes have the same purpose, to keep your dog safe and under control while out in public. An unleashed pet may present a danger to itself and to others. The issue is not "whether we should use a leash or not" [we know we should], the issue is "what kind of leash should we use?" In this article, we will compare the standard dog leash to the popular retractable leash.*

*The standard dog leash measures from four feet to eight feet in length, but six feet is the most common. Six feet allows plenty of room for freedom of movement, while being short enough to afford the handler complete control of their dog if necessary.*

*Longer leashes, including the retractable leash, have been connected to fatal accidents because the owner was unable to control the pets speed and direction. It only takes a second for a dog, quietly walking on the sidewalk, to dart in front of a car. A six-foot leash lets the owner control the animals movements more readily.*

*All dogs can be trained to walk at a heeled position and to ignore other distractions, but no dog is perfect, especially when a squirrel is involved. If the owner is not alert enough, his dog's abrupt behavior on a retractable leash could put him smack on the road, in front of a speeding car.*

*It is also impossible, while using a retractable leash, to monitor what your pet smells and possibly eats while on a walk. This can be a serious problem, if he quickly consumes something not healthy for him. It is equally impossible to predict where your dog may choose to*

urinate or defecate. This is a real issue in our Park, where pets are restricted from some areas.

Standard six-foot leashes have wrist straps, while retractable leashes rarely do. A common problem with this type of leash is dropping. If your dog is stretch out on a retractable leash and you accidentally drop the hard plastic handle, it could hurdle toward your pet and injure him. Thinking he is being pursued by the handle may even cause him to run away.

If you grab the cord or tape while it is being pulled by your pet, you could suffer from cuts or burns to your hands. The longer leash also provides a higher risk of getting your dog's leash tangled, sometimes around you.

One common occurrence, while using the retractable leash, is for the dog to slip out of his collar or "pop" his collar by darting for that pesky squirrel. When this happens the metal clip and collar will fly back to you and could cause serious injury to your face, teeth, or eyes.

Which leash you choose is certainly up to each dog owner, but we reserve the use of our retractable leash to settings where free-roaming is appropriate. We don't use them in our Park and don't recommend it to our dog owning friends.

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