

## Helping Dogs Cope with In-Home Construction: Some Tips from Eileenanddogs

- Make sure ahead of time that the people coming into your house know that you have dogs and are ready to abide by your guidelines of interaction or non-interaction.
- Arrange a space for yourself and the dogs ahead of time. You may not have access to needed items when construction is going on.
- Do desensitization/counterconditioning on unfamiliar carpentry noises ahead of time if possible, for instance hammers, saws, nail guns, compressors, spray noises, drilling.
- Keep your dogs' identification on them (collars and tags). Consider letting them drag a leash from a harness.
- Use crates, baby gates, and shut doors to separate your dogs from the construction, and also from each other if there is a chance of redirected aggression or resource guarding. Everybody is likely going to be stressed
- Limit your dogs' sight of the workers according to what helps the most. For most dogs, this will entail eliminating as much sight as possible. Use screens, closed doors, cardboard to cover internal windows, crate covers.
- Use recorded music to mask/muffle construction sounds.
- Alternatively, you can play relaxation music, but **only** if you have done that with your dogs previously and you are sure it works. Masking is usually the better option.
- Have a good supply of tasty frozen food toys and/or safe items your dog loves to chew. These may need to be pretty high value, considering how upset your dog may get.
- Be ready to manage your dogs using the principles of classical conditioning: whenever there is a scary or strange sound, give your dog/s a good treat. You may be able to use play as well with dogs who have a lot of interest and stamina for that.
- Avoid reverse conditioning. If you give your dog a food toy when the people first arrive, be sure she has seen or heard them first. You don't want a frozen food toy to start to predict something scary. Likewise, if you are going to be hanging out in an unusual space for your dogs, don't let going in there be a predictor of scary stuff about to happen. Practice hanging out there before the construction ever starts. After it does, mix things up and go in there sometimes when there is nothing going on.
- Communicate with the workers when you have to move your dogs to potty, etc.
- Check all gates and doors whenever you release your dogs into another area. For instance, if you have a fenced yard, check the external gates before you let your dog out to potty. Use a muzzle if you have a dog who is a bite risk and she is acclimated to it.
- Let your dog have a voice about his safe place if you can. It may be that his usual place is too close to the construction or otherwise unattractive to him. Follow his lead. If you make him go to his normal safe place and he doesn't feel safe, you could poison it.
- Prevent your dogs from going into unsafe areas of the house. Nails, plaster, drywall, and paint are all novel to your dog and she will probably want to investigate them.
- Consider the possibility of your dogs spending time away from home, at a friend's house or a boarding facility with which they are already happy and familiar. Unless the construction is making your house unsafe for them, they can come home in the evenings.