

# Reptile Incidents

The following is a partial listing of incidents involving captive reptiles, many of them resulting in serious injury or death. Both adults and children have died after being attacked by their own "pet" snakes or those who had escaped from their owners. Many animals are killed after such incidents.

Reptiles are specifically *excluded* from the protections of the federal Animal Welfare Act and from some local and state anti-cruelty laws.

**April 13, 2022/ Charles County, Maryland:** A 49-year-old man was found **dead** in his home alongside over 100 caged snakes, including rattlesnakes, cobras, black mambas and a 14-foot long Burmese Python.

**March 28, 2022/Richmond, Virginia:** Anti-venom was rushed to the hospital to treat a man bitten by his pet African pit viper.

**October 30, 2019/Oxford, Indiana:** A woman was strangled to **death** by her pet python.

**July 14, 2018/ Pinconning Township, Michigan:** A multistate search for anti-venom was sparked after a man was bitten by his pet cobra.

**May 26, 2018/Beech Grove, Indiana:** A 14-foot Burmese python was recaptured after escaping her cage and being on the loose for a week. Police had urged the public to call 911 immediately if they spotted the snake.

**February 2, 2018/Brentwood, Missouri:** Around 400 students were sent home after a 70-pound, 9-foot-long boa constrictor wriggled out of her classroom tank, setting off a frantic search. A ceramic floor was ripped up to retrieve her.

**September 26, 2017/ Hampshire, England:** A 31-year-old man was strangled to **death** by his escaped pet python.

**August 2, 2017/Rogersville, Missouri:** A 20-foot pet Burmese python was on the loose for about two months before being found. The Sheriff's Office had cautioned area residents not to let their children venture into high grass or densely wooded areas alone.

**July 2018/Virginia Beach, Virginia:** A 3-foot-long ball python pet python who had escaped from her tank and was on the loose for two weeks was found in a toilet miles away.

**May 16, 2017/Bostwick, Florida:** A man was flown to a hospital by helicopter in critical condition after attempting to kiss a rattlesnake who then bit him.

**September 5, 2016/West Babylon, New York:** A man was bitten by his "pet" Egyptian saw-scaled viper.

**August 21, 2015/Grand Rapids, Michigan:** A man was bitten by an African bush viper. Authorities believe that the snake was being kept as a "pet."

**April 18, 2015/Tampa, Florida:** A man was bitten on the lip by a water moccasin he'd been keeping in a pillowcase.

**August 24, 2014/Skippack, Pennsylvania:** A woman was bitten by her family's cobra, requiring a medical evacuation helicopter to be put on standby.



**August 5, 2013/Campbellton, New Brunswick, Canada:** Two young boys were **killed** by a python who had reportedly slithered through ventilation shafts after escaping from a reptile store. Reptile Ocean owner Jean-Claude Savoie was hosting the two boys, ages 5 and 7, for a sleepover with his own son at an apartment above his store.

**April 19, 2013/Torrance, California:** Police warned residents to be on alert after seven constrictors were found dumped in a local park.

**October 15, 2012/Chesterfield County, Virginia:** A man **died** after being bitten by his “pet” viper—one of 24 venomous snakes he kept at his home.

**July 16, 2012/Plymouth, Massachusetts:** A man was bitten by an escaped 11-foot-long python, who had been on the loose for a week.

**July 2, 2012/Mattoon, Illinois:** A 1-year-old boy sustained bruises scratches, and bite wounds after he was bitten on the foot by a python. The boy’s father found the snake wrapped around the boy in his crib. The snake was a neighbor’s escaped “pet.”

**July 2012/Caruthersville, Missouri:** A man found a 7-foot-long albino python in his garden who had escaped from a man who kept snakes and alligators as “pets.” In the same city, a child later found a boa constrictor in her family’s laundry room.

**June 17, 2012/Kapuskasing, Ontario, Canada:** An abandoned crocodile was killed by police after acting aggressively toward people walking near the empty lot where the animal was found.

**May 28, 2012/Bayonne, New Jersey:** A man was taken by ambulance to the hospital after being bitten by his 6-foot-long “pet” boa constrictor.

**May 27, 2012/Bluefield, West Virginia:** Although he’d survived multiple bites over the years, a pastor who used venomous snakes in his sermons **died** after being bitten by a rattlesnake he’d used “for years.” The man’s father had **died** in identical circumstances some years earlier.

**May 20, 2012/Brampton, Ontario, Canada:** A 3.5-foot-long alligator was found in a backyard. Authorities believe that the reptile was an abandoned “pet.”

**May 20, 2012/St. Petersburg, Florida:** A 6-foot-long boa constrictor, whose head had been bashed in, was dumped, still alive, into a garbage can, along with a dog. The snake died, and the dog survived.

**February 2012/Bozeman, Montana:** A woman called police to report that her “pet” cobra had bitten her and that “the snake was watching her everywhere she move[d].” Police found the snake, who turned out to be a boa constrictor, on the couch and helped “wrangle [the animal] back into captivity.”

**November 20, 2011/Hampton, Virginia:** A man throwing up blood was rushed to the hospital after being bitten by his “pet” cobra.

**August 6, 2011/Henderson, North Carolina:** A man keeping 60 snakes—51 venomous—in a single-wide trailer, was airlifted to a hospital after being bitten by one. The snakes—and 100 dead and frozen reptiles—were removed from the home.

**August 3, 2011/Calgary, Alberta, Canada:** A python weighing 60 pounds and with the girth of a fire hose was found in the bathtub of an apartment after the tenant moved out. Neighbors called authorities after hearing water running in the empty unit—the snake had managed to turn on the faucet. When located, the former tenant claimed that the snake was the last “thing” that she intended to move.

**July 26, 2011/Seguin, Texas:** A wildlife rehabilitator was attacked by a 14-foot-long boa constrictor. The snake clamped onto her hand and wrapped around her arm.

**July 1, 2011/Erie, Pennsylvania:** A man found a 3-foot-long alligator in his backyard. Officials suspected someone had abandoned the “pet” when the animal grew too big.

**June 14, 2011/Putnam Lake, New York:** A woman **died** after being bitten by her boyfriend’s black mamba, whom he’d kept illegally as a “pet.” The man had kept 75 snakes—56 poisonous—in their Putnam Lake home.

**May 1, 2011/Opelousas, Louisiana:** A gardener cutting weeds came across a large snake, believed to be a python, who latched onto his hand and dragged the man into the bushes. The snake let go and escaped when authorities arrived. The man’s fingertips were “shredded.”

**April 12, 2011/Lyons, Kansas:** A woman’s “pet” 8-foot-long python grabbed onto her neck and wouldn’t let go until a police officer pried the snake’s mouth apart.

**April 12, 2011/St. Francis, Wisconsin:** A man was bitten by his “pet” African Gaboon viper. Authorities removed 35 other exotic animals, including eight western diamondback rattlesnakes, three cobras, a temple viper, and another Gaboon viper.

**February 1, 2011/Fair Lawn, New Jersey:** A New Jersey man was left in critical condition after his “pet” cobra bit him.

**January 29, 2011/Chattanooga, Tennessee:** A man **died** after being bitten by his friend's copperhead snake.

**January 28, 2011/Tarpon Springs, Florida:** It took three police officers to contain a 200-pound, 14.5-foot-long African rock python outside an apartment complex. Officials believed that the snake had been dumped.

**October 30, 2010/West Jordan, Utah:** A 10-year-old boy sustained bites to his chin and face and under his ear from a 15-foot-long, 140-pound Burmese python who was being used as a prop at a Halloween party.

**September 10, 2010/Sumiton, Alabama:** A woman was bitten by an "extremely aggressive" "python-like" snake. The snake, described by witnesses as 10 feet long and 10 to 12 inches in diameter—had apparently escaped. The local police department issued a "be on the look out."

**August 26, 2010/Sebastian, Florida:** A woman was hospitalized after her 12-foot-long albino Burmese python bit her on the hand and wrapped around her arm.

**June 27, 2010/Hope, Indiana:** A "pet" boa constrictor bit a 1-year-old boy when he reached into a dresser drawer. The snake, measuring about 4 feet long and 2 inches in diameter, had escaped from a cage and been loose for a few days.

**June 10, 2010/Papillion, Nebraska:** A man was strangled to **death** by his "pet" boa constrictor.

**March 25, 2010/Floral Park, New York:** A man was hospitalized after being bitten by his "pet" diamondback rattlesnake, one of a handful of reptiles—most venomous—he kept at his residence.

**July 1, 2009/Oxford, Florida:** A 2-year-old girl was strangled to **death** in her crib by her family's "pet" python.

**January 20, 2009/Las Vegas, Nevada:** A Las Vegas couple was charged with child abuse after their "pet" 18-foot-long python wrapped around their 3-year-old toddler and began biting and constricting him, preventing the boy from breathing.

**October 23, 2008/Virginia Beach, Virginia:** A woman was strangled to **death** by her "pet" python.

**August 31, 2008/Las Vegas, Nevada:** A 13-year-old girl was nearly strangled to death by her "pet" python. Her father used a kitchen knife to cut off the snake's head.

**April 17, 2008/Eugene, Oregon:** A 12-foot-long python latched onto a pet store owner's finger; wrapped around her wrist, arm, and shoulder; and began moving toward her neck. A police officer responding to her 911 call found her lying on the ground bound tightly by the snake. The officer used his hands to pry open the snake's tightly clenched jaw, and a paramedic used a screwdriver to help force open the reptile's mouth, but they were initially unable to loosen the snake's grasp. They eventually managed to unwrap her.

**July 31, 2007/Charlotte, North Carolina:** A 15-month-old boy was rushed to the hospital after being bitten by a python who had been dumped in a popular local park.

**December 15, 2006/Camp Dennison, Ohio:** A man was **killed** by his "pet" boa constrictor. Sheriff's deputies found the 14-foot-long snake coiled around the man's neck, and it took three deputies to release the snake's hold.

**November 14, 2006/Indianapolis, Indiana:** Officers seized 15 venomous vipers—including cobras, rattlesnakes, green mambas, and copperheads—from the home of a man who'd been bitten.

**September 6, 2006/Lanesville, Indiana:** A 14-foot-long "pet" python crushed his owner to **death**.

**December 31, 2005/St. Louis, Missouri:** A man was bitten by his "pet" cobra.

**February 6, 2005/Crawford County, Ohio:** A man was bitten by his "pet" viper.

**September 29, 2004/Bay St. Louis, Mississippi:** A 17-foot-long "pet" Burmese python being kept in the owner's bathroom escaped and roamed the area before being lured back with food.

**July 23, 2004/Vero Beach, Florida:** An escaped or abandoned 16-foot-long Burmese python was found on the street. The animal control officer who responded said that he'd picked up "dozens" of loose pythons and boa constrictors over the years.

**April 14, 2004/Jonesville, Virginia:** A preacher **died** after being bitten by a rattlesnake during a serpent-handling service.

**April 6, 2004/Boston, Massachusetts:** A 7-foot-long python bit her owner's arm and wrapped around her leg.

**December 22, 2003/St. Louis, Missouri:** While being used as a prop in a school play, a bearded

dragon sank his claws into the handler's head. The handler claimed that the lizard "only bites a child once a year."

**December 19, 2003/Houston, Texas:** A pet store employee was bitten on the finger by a red spitting cobra.



**August 18, 2003/Tampa, Florida:** A man who kept 26 venomous snakes as "pets" was bitten by one of his black mambas. He was hospitalized in the intensive care unit and put on a respirator and dialysis.

**August 4, 2003/Cincinnati, Ohio:** A firefighter **died** after being bitten by his "pet" rhinoceros viper.

**July 19, 2003/Sugar Creek, Missouri:** After trying to lasso a crocodile who had approached anglers in the Missouri River, police shot and killed the animal. Police believed that the crocodile was a "pet" who'd been abandoned in the river.

**July 16, 2003/New Port Richey, Florida:** After a man's 10-foot-long, "very aggressive" "pet" python went missing, he admitted that the snake had once wrapped around his chest and begun to crush him. The man's arms were free, and he was able to escape. "I'm lucky he didn't get around my neck," he

**April 24, 2003/Washington, D.C.:** A woman's "pet" python bit her friend.

**March 15, 2003/Annapolis, Maryland:** The owner of a "pet" cottonmouth snake was charged with two criminal counts after the snake bit his girlfriend.

**November 20, 2002/Yacolt, Washington:** A man was bitten on the lip after kissing his "pet" rattlesnake.

**October 10, 2002/Bradenton, Florida:** A 9-foot-long python bit a homeowner. Authorities believed that the snake had escaped or been abandoned.

**August 1, 2002/Washington, D.C.:** An escaped or abandoned python was found in a neighborhood.

**July 13, 2002/Duluth, Minnesota:** A man was in critical condition after being bitten by his "pet" cobra.

**July 15, 2002/Landisville, Pennsylvania:** Police were surprised to find a missing "pet" alligator on the 15th green of a golf course.

**July 15, 2002/Duluth, Minnesota:** A man walked into a local bar and called for help after his "pet" cobra bit him twice on the hand. He was in critical condition.

**February 12, 2002/Aurora, Colorado:** A man was strangled to **death** when his 11-foot-long python wrapped around his head, neck, and chest. Three years earlier, a judge had ordered the man to get rid of a similar snake who had been deemed too large. Officials weren't sure whether the snake who killed the man was that same one. A firefighter responding to the 911 call was knocked off his feet when the snake coiled around his arm.

**January 17, 2002/Hollywood, Florida:** Police shot and killed a 5-foot-long "pet" iguana after the lizard latched onto and bit off the 14-year-old owner's fingertip. The teen owned six other iguanas.

**December 18, 2001/Westhaven, California:** A man was bitten by his "pet" cobra.

**October 7, 2001/Orlando, Florida:** Police shot and killed a 13.5-foot-long "pet" cobra who had been let loose and was found roaming around a suburban neighborhood.

**August 28, 2001/Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania:** An 8-year-old girl was strangled to **death** by her family's 10-foot-long "pet" python. The snake was one of five reptiles kept by the family.

**August 17, 2001/Johnston, Rhode Island:** A family was shocked to find a 5-foot-long, 150-pound alligator on their back porch. The alligator, Boots, turned out to be the escaped "pet" of a man who said that the reptile was harmless.

**July 4, 2001/Laurens County, South Carolina:** A man was temporarily paralyzed and required a ventilator after being bitten by his "pet" cobra.



**April 6, 2001/Miami, Florida:** In a period of four months, a man was bitten by his “pet” viper, a copperhead, and a rattlesnake.

**March 26, 2001/Allentown, Pennsylvania:** A “snake charmer” was bitten by a venomous cobra in front of about 500 people during a circus act. Some people in the audience thought that it was part of the act until the man abruptly ended his performance and said, “I’ve been bitten. Call 911.” It wasn’t the first time he’d been bitten by a snake.

**January 13, 2001/Richmond, Virginia:** A man was “brought back from the brink” of death after being bitten by his “pet” cobra.

**May 20, 2000/Buffalo, New York:** A man who kept a variety of reptiles as “pets” was hospitalized in critical condition after being bitten by his viper.

**May 9, 2000/Toronto, Ontario, Canada:** Ten apartments and several businesses had to be evacuated after a man’s “pet” viper escaped, prompting a massive hunt for the animal.

**December 22, 1999/Port Orange, Florida:** A man was **killed** by one of five pythons living in his home. When the man opened the snake’s cage, the animal latched onto his forehead, wrapped around his body, and suffocated him.

**December 18, 1999/Los Angeles, California:** A woman **died** after being bitten by one of 10 venomous snakes she kept as “pets.” The manager of her mobile home park said that she knew some of the snakes were illegal but she didn’t call animal control on the tenant because “[t]hat would have **killed** her.”

**December 1999/Pennsylvania:** A 3-week-old baby **died** from salmonella meningitis. The child was believed to have contracted a rare strain of salmonella from the family’s “pet” water dragon.

**September 1, 1999/Carlyle, Illinois:** A 3-year-old boy was squeezed to **death** by a “pet” python.

**April 29, 1998/New York, New York:** A high school freshman was bitten by a Burmese python as he tried to feed the snake, who was being kept in a science classroom.

**December 29, 1997/Hicksville, New York:** A 24-year-old snake handler was bitten by one of the world’s most venomous vipers. He was giving water to the African Gaboon viper when he was bitten on the right hand.

**July 20, 1997/Las Vegas, Nevada:** A woman’s ring finger was snapped off by a 5-foot-long “pet” iguana named Pepper. She was giving Pepper a bath in the family tub when, after a sudden snap of his jaws, she saw her finger floating in the water.

**October 10, 1996/New York, New York:** A teenage boy was **killed** by his “pet” 13-foot-long python.

**February 29, 1996/Hagerstown, Maryland:** A reptile hobbyist who was president of the Western Maryland Herpetological Society was bitten by his “pet” Gaboon viper, incurring serious damage to his hand. Four years earlier, another leader in the group **died** after being bitten by his “pet” cobra.

**September 1995/Anniston, Alabama:** A man **died** from rattlesnake bites while tossing a snake around in a game of catch with his friend, who was hospitalized with bites.

**July 19, 1995/Dumfries, Virginia:** A man was hospitalized in serious condition after being bitten twice by his “pet” cobra.

**August 31, 1994/Avondale, Pennsylvania:** A man took his 3-foot-long rattlesnake into a video store. After police arrived, the snake bit the man’s hand four times.

**August 31, 1993/Prince William County, Virginia:** The second man in 10 days was bitten on the hand by a highly venomous cobra he kept as a “pet.”

**August 28, 1993/Prince William County, Virginia:** After a man was bitten by a cobra, one of his 30 venomous snakes, he developed pneumonia, shortness of breath, and weakness. The 30 snakes couldn’t be located following the incident.

**August 1993/Howard County, Maryland:** An 18-year-old woman was bitten by a “pet” viper.

**1993/Commerce City, Colorado:** A 15-year-old boy was crushed to **death** by his “pet” python.

**May 30, 1992/Emmitsburg, Maryland:** A man who was considered a “snake expert” **died** after being bitten on the foot by a “pet” cobra.

**June 24, 1991/Long Beach, California:** A 9-year-old boy was home alone when a 12-foot-long “pet” python tried to swallow his foot. The child was left with minor puncture wounds.

**April 18, 1991/Gillette, Wyoming:** A man **died** after being bitten on his thumb by a “pet” rattlesnake.

**July 2, 1990/New Orleans, Louisiana:** An elderly woman was unsure what happened to her missing cats. She later found out that they'd been eaten by an escaped or abandoned 10-foot-long python in her backyard.

**May 28, 1990/Tacoma, Washington:** A 10-foot-long boa constrictor swallowed a woman's fist and wrapped around her forearm.