



SEARCH, RESCUE AND RECOVERY RESOURCES OF MINNESOTA

K-9 COMPETENCIES

Introduction.

These competencies are intended to provide guidance to K-9 handlers and law enforcement agencies regarding basic skills and experiences K-9 Teams should have when deployed into the field on search, rescue or recovery operations.

Scope.

The three core elements that all search and rescue K-9 Teams should adhere to are: they should be *trained, certified, and reliable*.

All K-9 Teams (1 dog & 1 handler) should be trained and certified to be deployable. Training should be regular and continuous and, along with certification, should be appropriate to the search environment and conditions confronting the Team in their deployments. In general, we suggest training be recorded for K-9 Teams of at least sixteen (16) hours per month, including blind and double-blind training. It is expected that K-9 Teams will be augmented in the field by a Field Tech (Flanker), who may well not be qualified in any of the K-9 competencies described herein; but, those Field Techs should themselves add value to the K-9 Team by possessing requisite field skills to assist the handler (such as GPS/map experience, radio skills, physical abilities to operate in the field under the circumstances presented, etc.).

Certified K-9 Teams should be recertified at least once every two years by a qualified evaluator that is not a member of the Team's own unit. Some recognized credentialing organizations are listed at the end of this document. Certification and training should take into account the fact that there are different levels of certification available that would apply to different search situations.

Reliability is achieved through training and deployment, although it is through the training records and certifications that reliability is actually measured. We recommend that K-9 teams include blind and double blind trainings to measure reliability. Handlers should keep accurate training records to show the success and failures experienced during training and the actions the handler took to correct any training issues.

Handlers and the organizations to which the K-9 teams belong should be aware of, and adhere to, applicable laws relating to medical information and data privacy disclosure limitations. In addition, handlers and the organizations to which the K-9 teams belong should maintain training at least at a basic level of first aid and, unless otherwise required and qualified by their organizations, Standards, or Medical Director, provide medical assistance to that basic level of first aid (and CPR if necessary to save lives).



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Recommended Competencies.

HANDLER SKILLS

Listed below is what SRRRMN considers the minimum competencies that K-9 Teams should train and test for relating to the types of searches we are commonly called to participate in.

Field Skills. All K-9 handlers should be competent in the following wilderness skills sets before certifying as a K-9 handler.

- Proficient with navigation skills (map and compass)
- Basic 1st Aid or higher
- CPR
- Proficient with radio communications
- Wilderness survival skills
- Mantracking (track, clue awareness)
- ICS 100, 200, and 700
- Appropriate physical fitness (suggested minimum is the ability to carry a 24 hour pack for 3 miles in under 1.5 hours)
- Maintain and carry equipment necessary for the search operations in question (pack, water, food, 1st aid, survival, clothing, etc.)

K-9 TEAM SKILLS

Area Search. Minimum 80 acres daytime search qualification with (at least) 1 subject. K-9 should be able to perform a trained final response. The K-9 team should also demonstrate qualification proficiency at night with a minimum of 40 acres, 1 subject.

Trailing. Minimum 1 mile, varied surfaces (parking lots, fields, woods, etc) aged a minimum of 12 hours (daytime); team should also be able to demonstrate proficiency at night with minimum ½ mile, aged minimum 4 hrs.)

Land HRD. Minimum 1 buried hide, 1 surface hide, 1 negative area, and 1 shoreline hide. The K-9 should perform a trained final response. Size of area to be approximately 2 acres.

Additional competencies are:

- a. Hazmat awareness
- b. Blood borne pathogens



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- c. ICS 100, 200, 700, 800, 809
- d. Crime Scene Preservation

Water HRD. Minimum 2 acres, 1 hide worked from boat and 1 shoreline hide worked from land. For Water cadaver, it is also recommended to take the boater safety course.

Urban Search and Rescue (USAR). Daytime minimum 3500 square foot rubble pile, average height of at least 6 ft., 2 hides (live or HRD – depending on discipline you are testing in); Live-find K-9s must perform a stationary bark alert (this is a national requirement for all live find USAR K-9 teams). Additional USAR testing should include blind tunnel, see-saw, chain link walk, 6 ft. ladder and 6 ft. high dog walk; team must demonstrate a stop and a turn on any obstacle except the tunnel. The Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA), described immediately below, should be completed prior to a field test by the certifying organization.

K-9 SKILLS

FSA (Foundation Skills Assessment). All of these following skills may be done as a unit check-off prior to any field evaluations except for USAR testing, in which case the FSA testing will be done by the certifying organization prior to any search (rubble) evaluation. All FSAs should be repeated at least every two (2) years. In addition, the K-9 team should have proof of successful completion of the AKC CGC or equivalent (this only needs to be done once in the career of the K-9).

Dog Behavior Evaluation.

1. Moving Vehicle Test.

The dog and handler will load into the back of a vehicle, such as a pickup truck, along with at least two other people and two other unfamiliar, controlled dogs. The vehicle will then be driven for a distance of at least 1/4 mile during which time the dog must not display aggressive or uncontrolled behavior.

2. Tie-Out Test.

The dog will be tied to a stationary point on a 6-foot lead. The handler will remain a minimum of 50 ft. from the dog and must not talk to or correct the dog once they have left it. Another handler, with an unfamiliar dog at heel, will walk by (not towards), 10 feet away from the point where the dog is tied. The dog may exhibit curiosity or a desire to greet or play with the other dog, but must not show aggressive or uncontrolled behavior. A stranger will then approach the dog, untie the lead and return with the dog to the owner.



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3. Stationary Vehicle Test.

The dog will be left in his/her vehicle, either crated or loose (if loose the handler must ensure that the dog cannot escape). Another handler, with an unfamiliar dog at heel will walk by (not towards), the vehicle, 10 ft. away. The testing dog may exhibit curiosity but must not show aggression such as uncontrolled barking, lunging, etc. A few barks are acceptable as long as the dog quickly settles down after the dog and handler have left.

Obedience Evaluation.

1. Heel.

The dog will heel on command through a straight walk, a right turn, a left turn, and a 180-degree turn. The dog will be off lead or on a loose lead; no leash corrections may be given. The handler may talk to the dog and repeat commands as long as it is not constant or overly harsh. The dog will sit or stand in the heeling position when the handler stops. This test may be done with up to 4 dog/handler teams simultaneously if the size of the area permits.

2. Long Stay.

The dog will remain in place without correction for approximately five minutes with the handler a minimum of 50 feet away and moving about naturally, conversing, drinking water, loading pack, etc. The dog will not be tied, although the leash may be left attached. The handler may repeat the stay command no more than 3 times in the 5 min. period. Other dogs and people may be present and moving around the dog, but no closer than 10 ft.; they will not interact directly with the dog(s) being tested. Multiple dogs may be tested at the same time

3. Recall.

The dog will be left on a stay, a minimum of 50 ft. from the handler and must return to the handler immediately when called.

4. Stop.

The handler must be able to stop the dog while it is in motion a minimum of 25 ft. away from the handler. Numbers 3 and 4 may be performed as one exercise (at the handler's option).

Agility Evaluation:

1. Jump

The dog must be able to jump into the back of a pickup (approximately 3 feet off the ground).



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2. Plank walk

Using a plank that is 12” wide and 8’ long, the dog should be able to walk it, turn around, stop, and sit or down on the plank elevated at least 3’ off the ground.

3. Tunnel

The dog must be able to go through an agility-sized tunnel at least 8’ long.

4. Crawl

Using an object such as a short table or piece of plywood no more than 2’ high, the dog must crawl from one side to the other.

Supplemental Information/Discussion.

For further information, some national credentialing organizations that are commonly utilized in this region are:

- NAPWDA (North American Police Work Dog Association)
<http://www.napwda.com/rosters-test-rules>
- NASAR (National Association of Search And Rescue)
<http://www.nasar.org/page/34/Canine-Search-and-Rescue>
- NSDA (National Search Dog Alliance) <http://www.n-sda.org/standards.php>
- IPWDA (International Police Work Dog Association)
<http://www.ipwda.org/certification.php>
- ARDA (America Rescue Dog Association) http://ardainc.org/about_standard.html
- AWDA (American Working Dog Association)
http://www.americanworkingdog.com/certification_standards.htm
- SARDUS (Search And Rescue Dogs of the United States)
<http://www.sardogsus.org/id17.html>

Note: Many of these national organizations have different “levels” of certification which is why we have indicated the above recommendations as the minimum.

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