



Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Council (PSARC) Trailing K-9 Specialist Guidelines and Expectations

Section I - General:

A. Purpose:

The Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Council Search and Rescue Canine / Handler performance expectations are developed:

1. To provide user agencies and SAR managers with recommended performance expectations for both the SAR Canines and the handler at a search scene
2. To provide an operating guideline for teams that are in line with nationally accepted guidelines for the performance of SAR Canine Teams
3. To designate minimum skill standards for Search and Rescue Canines in Pennsylvania.
4. For the purpose of this document, a Trailing Team is defined as one dog and one handler who train and work together but may include a navigator.

Section II – Definitions:

Trailing Dog — This type of canine is generally used to identify a particular subject by scent and is considered a scent specific canine. This canine, working on or off lead, requires a scent article from the lost subject to begin searching. The canine follows the scent trail providing the lost subjects direction of travel and potentially finding the lost subject.

Handler — The human member of the team. This person is responsible for the canine at all times.

Bark Find — After finding the lost subject, the canine remains at the subject's location and barks until the handler or other searchers come to that location.

Re-find — After finding the lost subject, the canine will return to the handler, perform a trained alert and then lead the handler back to the subject.

Human Scent Indication/Alert – A readable action performed by the canine which indicates to the handler that the canine has located human scent.

- Passive Indication – the canine indicates to the handler the positive scent source through a passive act such as sit or down
- Active Indication – the canine indicates to the handler positive scent source through active means such as barking touching or refind.

Navigator – Flanker that can be used to assist the Trailing Team during the evaluation with navigation.

Unit — A group of SAR handlers and their canine partners that train and work together. Support personnel may be included.

Section III - Performance Expectations Guidelines:

1. Handler

A handler is cooperative and professional. He/She has must meet the qualifications of their Team for search/evaluation. The handler must not participate in any search efforts independent of their search team/unit. This must be confirmed verbally or in writing with an office from the Handler/Canine, Team prior to testing.

2. Canine

The canine is friendly with people, non-aggressive toward other animals, and capable of working off lead (unless being used as a trailing dog). The canine is 18 months or older. The canine is expected to always be under the handler's control at all times, and capable of being controlled by others, if necessary.

Adaptability: Responding SAR Dog Teams are expected to search under all weather conditions, and at night as well as day. The dog teams are required to work regardless of distracting conditions such as dust, noise, crowds, machinery, and the presence of other animals or humans.

Portability: The SAR Dog Teams must be able to travel in all vehicles likely to be used by the unit. Special training is provided for operations in and around helicopters.

Equipment: The handler is equipped and clothed in a manner consistent with the search terrain and weather conditions. Handler must assure that the appropriate field pack is available to the team and contain supplies for self and canine, rendering the team self-sufficient on a task in the field for 24 hours.

Documentation: The handler must present a minimum of six months (recent) training log. This log must include date, time, location, and type of training, as well as a general description of the event such as ground cover, time of day, how the canine worked, successes, challenges, areas for improvement and other information deemed appropriate.

Communication: The SAR Dog Unit must be proficient in proper communication protocol.

Section IV – K-9 Trailing Specialist Performance Expectations/Prerequisites:

A. The handler will provide the proper documentation to show the successful completion of:

1. NASAR SARTECH II or other acceptable certification as defined by PSARC. (card or certificate)
2. NIMS IS-100, IS-200 and IS-700 (certificate required)
3. American Red Cross (or equivalent) Human Standard First Aid and CPR (current card)
4. Wilderness First Aid
5. AKC-Canine Good Citizen (certificate) *required for all canines who will work off-leash.*
6. Caine Health certificate from a licensed veterinarian listing current vaccines and/or titers. A current Rabies vaccine as required by law in the state of PA.
7. Crime Scene Preservation.

- B.** The handler will present evidence of the completion of training by a veterinarian, or other qualified individual, in canine 1st aid and CPR demonstrating the following:
1. General health of the working dog including nutrition and physical fitness
 2. How to muzzle a dog / how to create a gauze muzzle. The importance of muzzling an injured dog and proper restraint.
 3. Normal ranges: heart rate, respiration, rectal temperature
 4. How to check: heart rate, pulse, capillary refill
 5. Life threatening Injures: hypothermia, hyperthermia, checking ABC's (Airways, Breathing, Circulation)
 6. How to perform CPR, rescue breathing, Heimlich
 7. Proper carry methods for sick/injured dogs from the field
 8. Wound Care (how to stop bleeding until veterinary care can be obtained): abrasions, lacerations, punctures, deep wounds,
 9. Impalements
 10. Eye injuries
 11. Sprains, strains, fractures: how to splint
 12. Wild animal encounters: bite wounds (Rabies), snakes, porcupines
 13. Insects: bee stings, spider bites, ticks (Lyme disease) and mosquitoes (heartworm)
 14. Vomiting / Diarrhea
- C.** The handler will demonstrate sufficient knowledge in the following categories, by successfully completing a written exam administered by the PSARC evaluator(s) during the evaluation process and achieve a score of 80% or higher.
1. Canine Assessment and First Aid
 2. Canine training and documentation
 3. Scent Theory and Movement
 4. Environmental Factors Affecting Scent
 5. Search Strategy and Safety
 6. Communications
 7. Crime Scene Preservation
- D.** The Handler will present all training log documentation as outlined in section III to the PSARC evaluator(s) upon request.
- E.** The handler and canine must be in good physical condition and able to complete an assigned task. The handler must be able to work a SAR dog in moderate terrain for a minimum of eight (8) hours in a twenty-four (24) hour period.
- F.** The handler must demonstrate the canine's agility on unusual or unsteady surfaces, such as slippery wood, loose gravel, boulders or debris; and exhibit the canine's willingness to cross streams. The canine must demonstrate a willingness to respond to handler instruction and direction.
- G.** The handler must be able to recognize when the team is not working efficiently. It is the handler's responsibility to control their canine and provide for its care and safety at all times. If any behavior problems arise, it is the handler's responsibility to resolve the problem. The handler must be able to interact and work effectively with other SAR resources.

- H. The handler can demonstrate reading a map and compass/GPS unit to navigate during the day or night and identify and document the course taken during the search. The handler is able to read topographic maps and relate the actual terrain to the map. The handler is able to report to the command post, their location and the location of clues in terms of map coordinates. At the end of their operation period, the handler will be prepared to be debriefed by the search planning section. The handler is able to demonstrate how to document their search activity onto an incident operational map, including route taken, areas left uncovered, alerts, clues, wind direction and probability of detection.
- I. The handler will be able to identify and protect the scene when a clue or the lost subject is found.
- J. The handler is responsible, as task leader, for ensuring the highest level of medical care available is provided to the subject until further assistance arrives.
- K. It is recommended, that the handler successfully complete courses such as Managing the Lost Person Incident or Managing Search Operations to fully understand the handling of the lost person incident.

Section V Trailing Application Testing — Rural or Wilderness:

In addition to the prerequisites identified in Section III and IV, the team must be able to meet the following expectations for the specific types of search evaluations identified:

- 1 The handler and navigator, if used, can demonstrate reading a map and compass/GPS unit to navigate during the day or night, and identify and document the course taken during the search. The handler and navigator, if used, are able to read topographic maps and relate the actual terrain to the map. The handler and navigator can demonstrate reporting to the command post, their location and the location of clues in terms of map coordinates. At the end of their operation period, the handler and navigator, if used, will be prepared to be debriefed by the search planning section. The handler and navigator, if used, can demonstrate how to document their search activity onto an incident operational map, including route taken, areas left uncovered, alerts, clues, wind direction and probability of detection.
- 2 The handler must demonstrate the canine's agility on unusual or unsteady surfaces, such as slippery wood, loose gravel, boulders, or debris; and exhibit the canine's willingness to cross streams. The canine must demonstrate a willingness to respond to handler instruction and direction.
- 3 The evaluation shall represent typical search scenarios that will be encountered by the trailing team.

A. Trailing Evaluation Scenarios — Rural/ Wilderness

The following evaluations represent typical searching scenarios in Pa rural or wilderness situations. A scent article will be provided for each trailing problem meeting the following criteria:

- The article must be worn by the trail-layer/subject next to the skin for a minimum of 2 hours within the last 12 hours.
- The article must be preserved by the trail-layer in an uncontaminated (unscented) bag appropriate for the scent article.
- The scent article, in the preserved bag, will be placed within 20 feet from the start of the trail.

1. Day Trailing Problem: At least 1 mile, no greater than 1.5 miles, including at least one 90-degree turn covering variable surfaces including, but not limited to dirt, woodlands, field, gravel and pavement. It must not have any major obstacles such as fences, fast moving water or unsafe inclines or declines. This trail will be aged 6-10 hours and contain one area of heavy contamination, defined as cross tracks laid by 2 or more individuals 1 hour after the trail was laid. The handler may stop and rest the canine if needed then resume the trail. When located, the handler and navigator, if used, must assess the subject for injury, accurately place the subject on the map, call the coordinates into the base and recommend any medical assistance required. Candidate handler and canine partner will be evaluated using a maximum time limit of 2.5 (two and one-half) hours.

2. Night trail problem: Required for first time PSARC evaluation or additional PSARC evaluations that are expired by more than six months

At least 0.5 miles and no greater than 1 mile, including at least one 90-degree turn covering variable surfaces including, but not limited to dirt, woodlands, field, gravel and pavement. It must not have any major obstacles such as fences, fast moving water or unsafe inclines or declines. This trail will be aged 4 - 8 hours and contain one area of contamination, defined as cross tracks laid by 1 or more individuals 1 hour after the trail was laid. The handler may rest the canine during the trail if needed then resume the trail. When located, the handler and navigator, if used, must assess the subject for injury, accurately place the subject on the map, call the coordinates into the base and recommend any medical assistance required. Candidate handler and canine partner will be evaluated using a maximum time limit of 2 (two) hours.

Section V - Evaluation Procedure:

A. Briefing: The Evaluator will brief the handler on subject description, condition, point last seen, mental state, known hazards, and other important data. Handler will be provided with a topographical map of the area to be searched. The handler will provide briefing as the task leader and describe his or her search strategy.

B. The evaluation will be terminated under the following conditions:

1. Failure by handler and navigator, if used, to present for evaluation with appropriate attire and supplies for self and canine partner.
2. Rough or inappropriate treatment of the dog by the handler
3. Unsafe changes in terrain or weather
4. Failure to complete the task in the designated time.
5. Inability of the team to locate the subject in the designated time.
6. Inability of the handler and/or navigator, to report the location of the subject on the map to the evaluator.

PSARC Evaluations will NOT be performed for independent Canine Handlers.

The SAR Canine Team must pass field evaluations, which replicate situations they are likely to encounter during a search.

The SAR Canine Team shall pass a re-evaluation every two (2) years.