



Checklist for Choosing a K9 Search Team

- ☑ **Check Certification Bodies:** Request a resume. Determine which certification organizations the team claims to be affiliated with, such as the National Association for Canine Scent Work (NACSW), the International Police Work Dog Association (IPWDA), or FEMA for urban search and rescue. Visit the certification body's website to confirm that the team is listed in their directory or registry.
- ☑ **Verify Training Records:** Ask for documentation of the team's training and certification. This can include certificates of completion from recognized SAR training programs or schools, as well as records of any specialized training relevant to their role. Verify training has been conducted by a master trainer or judge.
- ☑ **Review Experience and References:** Inquire about the team's experience in real-life search and rescue operations. Request a minimum of 3 references. Contact previous organizations or agencies they have worked with to get feedback on their performance and reliability.
- ☑ **Do your own research:** Google/Search their name online and look for articles written about the team. Review their website and look for information that will help you make your decision.
- ☑ **Confirm Membership in Professional Organizations:** Check if the team or their individual members are members of professional SAR organizations such as the National Search and Rescue Association (NSARA) or the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG). Membership often requires adherence to certain standards and ongoing training.
- ☑ **Evaluate Equipment and Protocols:** Ensure the team uses up-to-date equipment and follows established protocols for SAR operations. This can include the dog's gear, tracking devices, and safety measures.
- ☑ **Ask for Demonstrations:** If possible, observe a training session or a demonstration of the team's skills. This allows you to see firsthand how the dog and handler work together in practice.
- ☑ **Check Compliance with Local Regulations:** Some regions have specific regulations or requirements for SAR teams. Verify that the team complies with any local or regional standards for search and rescue operations.

By taking these steps, you can gain confidence in the credentials and capabilities of a SAR dog team.