

Search and Rescue Council of New Jersey

STANDARDS for TRAILING K-9 SEARCH AND RESCUE DOG and HANDLER

PURPOSE:

To establish a minimum level of competency for all trailing dog teams so they may be recognized and accepted as credible resources for search & rescue operations within the state of New Jersey. Criteria are set forth herein for both handlers and dog as it pertains to performance, training, knowledge and professionalism.

Canine (K9) teams (handler and dog) who are members of Search and Rescue organizations affiliated with the Search and Rescue Council of New Jersey (SARCNJ) shall comply with or exceed the requirements detailed in these standards.

K-9 HANDLER

1. The handlers must be at least 18 years of age and physically fit.
2. The handler must have a current certification in SAR Tech – Type III or equivalent, CPR and Basic First Aid.
3. The handler must be trained to the level of NIMS/ICS as required by the agency.
4. The handler must be trained to the “Awareness” level in Hazardous Materials, IS-5 Hazardous Materials: A Citizen’s Orientation or equivalent.
5. The handler must have the knowledge and ability to evaluate hazards, select safe routes and follow safe work procedures within their assigned work environment.
6. The handler must be able to use a map and compass effectively to navigate between two points.
7. The handler must be competent with USGS Topographical maps and be able to read a back azimuth.
8. The handler must demonstrate basic competency in land navigation and provide documentation of formal classroom and field training.
9. The handler must be able to estimate distances in the outdoors and across water.
10. The handler must be competent with portable radio operations.
11. The handler must be able to explain and demonstrate knowledge of K-9 health maintenance and first aid.
12. The handler must be able to translate field activity to the command post at the end of their search, including the route taken, areas left uncovered, alerts, wind direction, and probability of detection of victim.
13. The handler must be able to communicate to the dog the end or conclusion of a search or operation period in a positive manner.
14. The handler must attend formal classroom instruction for preservation of a crime scene.
15. The handler must be able to report the location of a find using map coordinates (UTM, Lat-Long, topomap markings, etc.), without assistance from electronic equipment.
16. . Handler must have specific knowledge of scent theory.

17. Handler must have written proof of regular consistent training. Detailed enough to demonstrate the ability and recognize the limitations of both dog and handler
18. Handler must, at all times, demonstrate professionalism in the handling of his dog and accuracy in the presentation of evidence at a search.
19. Handler must, at all times, demonstrate proper maintenance of both dog and handler

DOG:

1. The dog must demonstrate the ability and desire to follow a specific human scent to a successful conclusion.
2. The dog must be appropriately licensed, vaccinated and in good physical condition.

TEAM:

1. The team must demonstrate their ability to work together, the dog performing the trailing action and handler interpreting the movement of the dog and assisting the dog, as needed, in reaching the lost subject.
2. At no time shall the team engage in any search & rescue mission that exceeds the abilities of the team (i.e. situations or conditions for which the team has not previously trained)
3. The team must never lose site of the ultimate goal of a search mission - to expeditiously locate the lost subject. Any performance by a team who knowingly embarks on a trail for which it is not qualified or has not previously trained shall be grounds for rescission of the level 1 status achievement.

EVALUATION:

1. All trailing teams attempting to qualify shall be accompanied by at least one qualified trailing evaluator. The evaluator shall have in his possession an accurate map of the trail as laid by the trail layer, and shall be in radio contact with the trail layer, as needed, during the runner of the trail. The trail is to be designed by the qualified trail evaluator.
2. Prior to starting the trail, the evaluator shall explain to the handler that the trail is within 20 feet of the starting point, that the area has been contaminated by 2 other people and that it is the responsibility of the team to find the trail and determine the direction of travel.
3. The handler shall be advised of the approximate length and age of the trail and that it is the responsibility of the team to verbally communicate to the evaluator his interpretation of the dog's work after the running of the trail.
4. The handler shall also be advised that during the running of the handler may "break" his dog as needed.
5. The handler is expected to accurately describe the dog's indication of the correct subject.
6. The evaluator shall not interfere or influence the team once the dog has been scented.
7. The evaluator may ask the handler if the dog is actively working the trail should the dog appear to be having problems.

ACTIONS THAT SHALL RESULT IN FAILURE OF THE TEAM:

1. Failure of dog to find and follow the trail after being scented.

2. Dog's lack of drive or interest in following the trail.
3. Excessive interest in animal or other smells making it impossible to follow trail in a timely fashion.
4. Failure of dog to properly identify runner (Indication as described by handler)
5. Rough, harsh or inappropriate treatment of dog by handler.
6. Failure on the part of the handler to recognize that the dog has lost the trail and / or failure on the part of the handler to get the dog back on the trail in a reasonable amount of time. (15 minutes)

IN THE EVENT OF ANY OF THESE SITUATIONS, EVALUATOR SHALL IMMEDIATELY ADVISE THE HANDLER OF THE PROBLEM AND THE TEST SHALL TERMINATE.

FIELD TEST FOR BASIC TRAILING TEAM

Length of trail:

Approx. 1 mile

Age of trail:

4 to 12 hours

Terrain:

Representative of New Jersey wilderness:

Scent articles:

An article of clothing worn next to the skin of the trail layer for at least 30 minutes and preserved uncontaminated, OR

A 4X4 gauze pad applied to the trail layer's skin for at least 30 minutes and preserved uncontaminated.

TRAIL LAYER:

The trail layer must report the exact path of the trail, leaving no markers of any kind along the path. The trail layer must be wearing subtle clothing and must be completely out of sight and at ground level at the end of the trail.

STARTING AREA OF TRAIL:

Scent article is to be placed approx. 20 feet from the actual start of the trail in such a way that the direction of travel is not obvious.

Starting area is to have been contaminated by 2 other people after the trail has been laid.

TRAIL:

Trail is to be a natural wandering trail containing at least 2-90 degree turns at least 2 cross trails over at least 2 different surfaces having no major obstacles (streams, fences, etc)

RUNNING THE TRAIL:

During the course of running the trail the team must demonstrate the following:

Ability to accept scent article.

Ability to locate the start of the trail.

Ability to quickly determine the direction of travel.

Ability on the part of the handler to read the dogs indications.

Ability on the part of the handler to recover and restart the team should the dog get off the trail.

Ability of the handler to care for the dog and himself / herself along the trail (water, etc.)

Ability of the team to work through the cross trail locations.

INDICATION AT END OF TRAIL:

Prior to the start of the trail, the handler shall clearly describe to the evaluators what indication the dog shall do to determine the end of the trail and the location of the trail layer.