

Middle Creek Search and Rescue K9 Team - New Handler Checklist

- Attend at least 3 MIDSAR K9 Team monthly exercise sessions without your dog.
 - This allows you to meet and be introduced to the handlers and other members of the team who attend training sessions. It allows you to ask any questions that you have, to follow along with several dogs as a flanker, to learn how to be a subject, and to see how the team runs exercise sessions.
- Schedule an evaluation session for both dog and handler with K9 Team Captain and/or Lieutenant.
 - At a mutually convenient time and location, a MIDSAR K9 Team officer will meet with you and your dog. The evaluation process is designed to identify your dog's strengths and weaknesses, and to offer advice for next steps in training if appropriate. The evaluation process will last at least 2 hours. It will include setting up a number of different situations to see how your dog responds, and will also include a 30 minute handler interview. Please bring the following to the evaluation session:
 - A hard sided crate for confinement of your dog.
 - Water for your dog.
 - A training collar and leash.
 - Your dog's favorite toy.
 - A food reward your dog enjoys, such as small pieces of semi-moist treats or biscuits.
 - Your dog's vaccination record, proof of license.
 - Obedience certification, Canine Good Citizen certificate, therapy. If age appropriate.
 - Certifications you and your dog already have, if appropriate.
- Join Middle Creek Search and Rescue.
 - An application is available for download on-line at www.midsar.org. Alternatively, one is included in the K9 Team Information Packet.
 - Once you join MIDSAR, in addition to attending K9 Team exercise sessions, you should expect to begin attending monthly MIDSAR meetings and functions. K9 Team members must be considered MIDSAR members in good standing in order to maintain active status and to become certified.

On-going expectations.

- Handlers are expected to train their dogs outside of the monthly team exercise sessions. MIDSAR K9 team members are available on a limited basis to assist you with training questions, problems, etc., as suits their schedule and the team's schedule. However, the guidance of a professional trainer or consultant is highly recommended.
- Handlers are expected to attend at least 50% of K9 Team monthly exercise sessions in any given calendar year, in order to qualify for active status. Handlers are encouraged to actively participate in locating sites for, and hosting, team exercises.
- Handlers are expected to maintain their own level of physical fitness, as well as the physical fitness and general health of their dog.
- The handler should bring their pack to team exercises. See the K9 Team pack list in the Information Packet for a list of suggested items.
- Handlers are expected to maintain an up-to-date training log, and to have the log available for inspection at monthly exercise sessions. For ideas on how to create a log, see the samples included in the Information Packet. Basic information that should be included in a log are:
 - Date of training
 - Time of day
 - Weather conditions
 - Type of problems
 - Map, drawing, detailed description of problem
 - Detailed description of the dog's behavior in completing the problem.
 - Length of time taken to complete the problem.
 - Name and basic description of subject.
- In addition to the pack and training log, handlers must bring the following items to team exercises:
 - Hard sided crate for confinement of your dog during periods of inactivity. This should fit in your vehicle and be used as such.
 - Crate fan
 - Water for your dog.
 - Reward items for your dog. (e.g. treats, toy, tug)
 - Training collar, harness and leash.
 - Waste collection bags.
 - Family Service Radio or Ham Radio.

- Handlers are expected to develop or demonstrate map and compass skills appropriate for the completion of Canine tasks. To this end, handlers must take the MIDSAR Grid Techniques class, which is offered in-house on a regular basis, or an equivalent class.
- Handlers should expect to develop or demonstrate basic radio communication skills. To this end, handlers are encouraged to obtain their Ham Radio license. Classes and authorized testing are available through MIDSAR.

Progress towards MIDSAR Canine Certification.

- See MIDSAR K9 Team Standards for details of certification requirements.
- Your dog is expected to pass the Canine Good Citizen test with you as his or her handler. This is offered widely and is inexpensive to take.
- The handler is expected to obtain American Red Cross CPR and First Aid, or an equivalent qualification.
- A Canine First Aid certification is desirable.
- The handler is expected to continually seek ongoing educational opportunities from both within and outside of, MIDSAR. These opportunities might include:
 - Classes offered by MIDSAR's DCNR certified instructors, such as the Management of Search Operations (MSO) course.
 - Seminars (e.g. attendance at the Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Council SAR-Ex, held at Pinch Pond Campground each spring).
 - Membership of SAR organizations such as PSARC or NASAR (National Association for Search and Rescue).
 - The advice and guidance of a professional dog trainer. If you need a recommendation, speak to the Canine Team members.
 - FEMA courses in emergency and SAR management, namely IS700 and IS800. These courses are free and can be taken on-line, see <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/crslist.asp>.
 - Pursuit of SAR qualifications for the handler, e.g. DCNR's Field Team Member or Field Team Leader or NASAR's SARTECH III or SARTECH II.
 - Pursuit of outside certifications for you and your dog, e.g. DCNR or NASAR's canine certifications.
 - Books. For a recommendation, speak to the K9 Team members.

The MIDSAR K9 Team consists of dedicated handlers and their dogs. We hope this checklist will prove useful in helping new handlers understand the process of becoming a member of the team and training towards active status as a certified handler-canine pair.