



Middle Creek Search & Rescue
...where teamwork is a tradition.

Dedicated and trained volunteers providing community support to South Central PA.

K9 TEAM STANDARDS



PURPOSE

- I. To provide an operating guideline that is in line with nationally accepted guidelines (DCNR, NASAR) for the performance of MIDSAR Canine teams.
- II. The MIDSAR Canine Level 1 - Certification is designed to identify the minimum knowledge and performance skills needed by an individual and their canine partner to perform as a MIDSAR Canine Team, and to allow that canine to be present on a search scene.
- III. The MIDSAR Canine Level 2 – Certification defines minimum performance and skill levels needed by an individual and their canine partner to perform as an operational high priority MIDSAR Canine Team.

DEFINITIONS

Air Scent Dog/Area Search Dog - This canine is used to search and clear a specific area. It is not expected to require a scent article prior to searching, but one may be used at the discretion of the handler. The canine generally works off lead and searches for live human scent. This may include multiple subjects. The canine should have a distinct alert readable by the handler. The canine should do a re-find, bark alert, or provide other means of alerting the handler, until the handler and subject are together.

Alert – A recognizable action initiated by the canine which indicates to the handler that the canine has located the subject.

Bark Alert - The canine remains at the found subject's location and barks until the handler or other searchers come to that location.

Re-find - This is an alert method employed by canines working off lead. After the canine has located the subject, it returns to the handler (one or more times) and leads him/her back to the lost subject.

HRD Dog – “Human Remains Detection” canine is used to locate a known deceased subject or human cadaver. Can also be used for forensic work to indicate and/or locate cadaver material. e.g.: as for use in a crime investigation.

Scent Discriminating Dog - This type of canine is generally used to identify a particular subject by scent. With the canine working on or off lead, the handler requires a scent article from the lost subject to begin searching. The canine should follow the scent trail until it identifies the lost subject, or until it indicates that the trail has suddenly ended.

Tracking Dog – This scent discriminating canine traditionally works on lead and actually follows the person’s footsteps in a step by step pursuit and seldom strays more than a few feet from the track. He will use both the human scent left by the passing individual and the track scent of the disturbed vegetation and soil to track his subject.

Trailing Dog – The scent discriminating trailing canine may work on or off lead. He normally works with his head down, but will raise it when crossing or working into the wind. His focus is on human scent that has settled on the ground around where the subject has traveled. He may work some distance from the actual trail, depending on the wind conditions when the trail was laid, and the age of the trail. He will tend to work the downwind side of the trail and may either cut or overshoot the corners of the subject’s trail.

Training Log – Handlers are expected to keep a training log. This log should include date, time, location, and type of training. It should also include a general description of the event such as the type of terrain and ground cover, time of day, how the canine worked, successes, challenges, areas for improvement, and other information deemed appropriate. This log should be maintained neatly and made available for any evaluator or user agency upon their request.

SAR K9 Team - For the purpose of this document, a SAR Dog (Search and Rescue Canine) team is defined as one canine and one handler who normally train and work together.

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

Subject – The lost or missing person(s) that the canine is trying to locate

Unit - A group of SAR Dog/Handler Teams who are assigned to work together. Support personnel who are non-canine handlers may be included.

K9 Team Active Status - In order to remain on an active status, the K9 team must:

- Attend and participate in a minimum of **50%** of the MIDSAR K9 team exercises each year.
- Be a MIDSAR member in good standing
- Adhere to all guidelines in this Standard

Evaluator – An individual who is qualified to participate in MIDSAR K9 Team screenings, testing, and certification processes.

K9 Review Board – An appointed board of K9 Team Leaders and qualified Evaluators (must include at least one Chief Officer). The purpose of the K9 Review Board is to assist in facilitating K9 team procedures, objectives and continued team development. The K9 Review Board meets at least bi-annually or at the request of MIDSAR officers.

GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS

Adaptability

- Responding SAR K9 Teams must be able to search under all weather conditions, and shall be able to search during the night as well as during the day.
- Canine and handler must be able to negotiate adverse terrain and work through or around barriers, whether natural or man-made.
- The K9 teams must be able to work regardless of distracting conditions such as, noise, crowds, traffic, people, machinery, and the presence of other animals.

Portability

- The SAR K9 Teams should be able to travel by boat, aircraft, and a variety of motor vehicles.
- Training should include all transportation vehicles likely to be used by the unit.
- Handlers shall have their dog restrained, confined or under control at all times while in a moving vehicle.

Equipment

- The SAR K9 Teams must be equipped and clothed in a manner consistent with the search terrain, weather conditions, and safety standards.
- The handler must provide transportation, shelter, equipment, basic first aid, food and water for their canine during all team activities.
- Handlers shall provide a hard sided crate to be used for safe confinement of their canine during times of inactivity.

HANDLER

- The handler must meet the training qualifications as defined in the MIDSAR Standards.
- The handler is a professional volunteer, and should act accordingly.
- The handler must be able to interact, cooperate and work effectively with other SAR resources
- MIDSAR K9 Teams must be minimally at a MIDSAR Level 1 Certification in order to have their canine on a search scene.
- The handler must be in good physical condition and should be able to work with or without a SAR Dog, in moderate terrain to meet the requirements of an assigned search task.
- 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, or the canine will be dismissed.
- The handler must be able to recognize when the team is not working efficiently and report that condition to the team leaders.
- The handler needs to be able to recognize signs of stress, illness or fatigue in their canine and respond appropriately.
- The handler must successfully complete an American Red Cross standard first aid and CPR course (or other equivalent) and understand basic canine first aid.
- The handler is responsible for the care of himself, his canine, and the subject when found.
- The handler must have enough food and water, plus a search pack capable of sustaining himself and his canine during the duration of a search. (See equipment list in MIDSAR SOG's.)
- The handler out in the field must be able to report to the command post their location and the location of clues. At the end of their operation period, the handler must be prepared to be debriefed by the search Planning Section. To convey at debriefing how their dog worked an assigned search task and be able to determine the POD (probability of detection).
- The handler must be able to translate their search activity onto an incident operational map, including route taken, areas left uncovered, alerts, clues, wind direction, etc.
- The handler must be able to identify and protect a potential crime scene when a clue or the lost subject is found.

Canine

- All canines identified as SAR Dogs, whether certified or in training, must be non-aggressive to people and tolerant of other animals. Any aggression issues will be addressed; canines who display aggressive behavior toward people will not be tolerated and will be removed from the team. Canines who display aggressive behavior towards other canines or animals will be dismissed at the discretion of the K9 Review Board.
- The canine must be sufficiently obedience trained to be under the handler's control at all times, and capable of being controlled by others, if necessary. The canine should respond quickly and eagerly to voice commands or hand signals while in the presence of other canines and people, and while under the duress of unusual noises and situations.
- The canine must be in good physical condition and capable of working with the handler in moderate terrain to meet the requirements of an assigned search task.
- The canine must have current necessary vaccinations.
- Documentation of vaccinations must be available at all times. State law requires proof of rabies vaccination. A rabies vaccination tag is not sufficient.
- The Canine Review Board retains the right to review the status of any canine at any time. Whether in-training or operational.

Canine Attendance at other team events

- A Canine must be certified in either the AKC Canine Good Citizen (CGC) or through a Therapy program such as TDI (Therapy Dog International) or Delta, before a canine will be permitted to attend team events such as fundraisers, demonstrations and team meets & greets. Puppies and young dogs that have been successfully evaluated by MIDSAR will have a grace period up to 18 months of age to attain these certifications since they are restricted by a minimum age requirement.
- Retired, MIDSAR-certified SAR Dogs, therapy and SAR Dogs in training are permitted to attend fundraisers and demonstrations. If they meet the above criteria.
- At anytime during an event, a MIDSAR officer, at their discretion, can ask you to remove your dog.

GENERAL PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

Refer to additional MIDSAR documents:

“MIDSAR K9 Team New Handler Checklist”

“Proper Care and Handling of Dogs at Trainings, Searches and Public Events”

CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES

- MIDSAR only evaluates and certifies members' canines in trailing and air-scent/area search.
- MIDSAR does not evaluate or certify members' canines in the discipline of HRD. Certification must be attained through an outside agency.
 - A canine team that has attained outside HRD certification as an additional discipline may be listed as an outside resource with MIDSAR and/or other agencies.
 - A canine that is exclusively used for HRD is not eligible to be on the Canine Team. The recognized intent of the canine team is for the focus to be on live find disciplines.
- A canine with certification through a reputable outside agency (ie: NASAR, IPWDA, NPWDA, DCNR, ARDA) will still be reviewed by MIDSAR's K9 Review Board before granting team operational status. MIDSAR retains the right to test the canine by team standards within 6 months of submitting a copy of the outside certification.
- Testing is the responsibility of the handler who must contact team officers to request a test or re-test.
- If a canine fails a test, a re-test may be scheduled.
- If a handler uses multiple canines, each canine must be tested with the handler as a team.
- If a canine has multiple handlers, each handler must be tested with the canine as a team.
- If a team has been dropped from Canine Team Active Status, they may be required to be re-evaluated and/or re-tested to regain their active status.
- The Canine Review Board retains the right to review the status of any canine at any time. Whether in-training or operational.

Evaluators

- Testing evaluations will be administered by three evaluators.
- Evaluators will be appointed by the K9 Review Board.
- Evaluators will not assist the handler in any way including, but not limited to coaching, directing, interfering or handling the canine.
 - Any assistance given by any evaluator will be taken as an unsuccessful attempt of the canine team and the problem being worked.

CERTIFICATION

AIR SCENT/AREA SEARCH CANINE TEAM

- Handler must show proficiency of map (e.g.-topo, street, park trails, etc.) and compass skills.
- The team must be able to effectively cover their entire assigned area to locate and accurately identify the subject. Once located, the handler must notify base of the find, accurately identify the location on the map, assess the medical condition of the subject(s) and assist if necessary in removing the subject(s) from the area.
- The handler must protect any crime scene as appropriate.
- The handler must be able to tell when the canine is no longer working.
- In addition to the requirements stated previously, the canine and handler, as a team, must pass field evaluations that occur in their normal geographical area of work and which replicate situations they are likely to encounter.

LEVEL 1 – AREA SEARCH

Area problem: An area of approximately – 30 acres. Handler should evaluate information provided regarding missing subjects, determine search strategy, and search the area for the subjects. One subject will be placed at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the search. The subject will be well-hidden, wearing dark or camouflage clothing, and will remain stationary until found. Handler should direct search activity according to wind, terrain and cover. Handler must identify canine's alert and should follow the canine in to the subject. The canine should make a clear alert, and should eagerly move in to the subject. The handler should assess the subject, accurately place the subject on the map, and call this information into command. Handler and canine must complete this scenario and report the area has been cleared within the **maximum time limit of 90 minutes**

LEVEL 2 – AREA SEARCH

Area problem: An area of approximately - 40 acres. Handler should evaluate information provided regarding missing subjects, determine search strategy, and search the area for the subjects. Two to four subjects (actual number not known to the handler) will be placed at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the search. The subjects will be -hidden, wearing dark or camouflage clothing, and will remain stationary until found. Handler should direct search activity according to wind, terrain and cover. Handler must identify canine's alert and should follow the canine in to the subjects. The canine should make a clear alert and should eagerly move in to subjects. The handler should assess each subject, accurately place the subject on the map, and call this information into command. Handler and canine must complete this scenario and report that the area has been cleared within the **maximum time limit of 3 hours**.

RE-CERTIFICATION

Certification is valid for two years. SAR K9 Teams must retest to retain operational status.

If an effort to re-certify is made by the handler but delayed beyond the 2 year period, due to scheduling conflicts and/or lack of necessary personnel for re-testing. An extension of certification may be granted at the discretion of the K9 Review Board till a re-test can be scheduled.

CERTIFICATION (continued)

SCENT DISCRIMINATING TRAILING CANINE TEAM

- Handler must show proficiency of map (e.g.-topo, street, park trails, etc.) and compass skills.
- Handlers must demonstrate proficiency in collecting and handling scent material.
- If worked on lead, handler must be physically capable of handling a 15-30 foot lead in rough and varied terrain and handling their canine on trails of 1 to 4 hours duration. Handlers must be capable of assisting their canine over or under fences, across streams or breaks in the terrain, must be knowledgeable about and aware of visual clues in the urban and wilderness environments, and should be able to describe how their canine behaves when a subject is located. Handlers must be able to recognize scent pools and be able to assist their canine out of it if necessary.
- Canine must demonstrate the ability to take scent from a variety of scent articles. Wood, metal, soil or any material presented to it by the handler whether it is bagged or in contact with a larger object such as a door handle, windowsill, footprint on the trail, or car seat may be used.
- Canine must be able to find the most recent trail of a subject leaving the area from a contaminated area at least 100 feet in diameter.
- Canine should demonstrate a willingness to resume trailing after being rested by the handler without being re-scented (it is recommended to work towards the ability to start without re-scenting. If canine must be re-scented, handler must understand the limitations).
- The team must be able to follow a trail to locate and accurately identify the subject. Once located, the handler must notify base of the find, accurately identify the location on the map, assess the medical condition of the subject(s) and assist if necessary in removing the subject(s) from the area.
- The handler must protect any crime scene as appropriate.
- The handler must be able to tell when the canine is no longer working the trail.
- In addition to the requirements stated previously, the canine and handler, as a team, must pass field evaluations that occur in their normal geographical area of work and which replicate situations they are likely to encounter.

LEVEL 1 – TRAIL

Semi-Rural Trail: A trail that is at least 4 to 8 hours old, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile in length, over varied terrain, in a semi-rural environment. It should cross at least one road (paved or gravel) or stream. It may or may not follow a wood's trail and shall have at least 3 turns. The canine should make a clear alert on the subject, provide a re-find if necessary, and should eagerly move in to subject. Handler should assess the subject; identify their location, contact base with location and medical assessment. The handler may attempt one restart at the PLS as long as it is still within the time allowed. Handler and canine must complete this scenario within the **maximum time limit of 60 minutes**.

CERTIFICATION (continued)

LEVEL 2 – TRAIL

Wilderness Trail: A trail that is at least 12 to 18 hours old, 1 to 1½ miles in length through varied terrain and vegetation. It should follow a dirt road or trail for part of it, have at least 5 turns and generally meander as a lost person may do. The subject and a second person will start walking together and split apart at some point along the trail. The subject will be concealed and not readily visible from 50 feet. The canine must clearly identify the correct subject, provide a clear alert, and should eagerly move in to subject. Handler should assess the subject; identify their location, contact base with location and medical assessment. Handlers must acquire their own scent article. The handler may attempt one restart at the PLS as long as it is still within the time allowed. Handler and canine must complete this scenario within the **maximum time limit of 90 minutes**.

OR

Urban Trail: A trail that is at least 10 to 12 hours old and ¾ to 1 miles in length. It should start in a paved and highly contaminated area, contain a variety of surfaces including but not exclusively, macadam, pavement, grass (field), foot trails and sidewalks, and follow a meandering course. The subject will be concealed and not readily visible from 50 feet. The canine should make a clear alert, perform a re-find if needed, and should eagerly move in to subject. Handler should assess the subject; identify their location, contact base with location and medical assessment. Handlers must acquire their own scent article. The handler may attempt one restart at the PLS as long as it is still within the time allowed. Handler and canine must complete this scenario within the **maximum time limit of 90 minutes**.

RE-CERTIFICATION

Certification is valid for two years. SAR K9 Teams must retest to retain operational status.

If an effort to re-certify is made by the handler but delayed beyond the 2 year period, due to scheduling conflicts and/or lack of necessary personnel for re-testing. An extension of certification may be granted at the discretion of the K9 Review Board till a re-test can be scheduled.

Note: MIDSAR photo ID cards, identifying the handler and the canine, with a description of their certification, will be issued to K9 teams after successfully completing one of the above testing scenarios. Team identification shall be brought to searches, trainings, demonstrations, meets & greets and fundraisers.