

Oregon State Sheriff's Association



Minimum Search Dog Team Standards Revision 12/15/2003

Oregon State Sheriffs' Association

Revision History

November 11, 2001	OSDC	Last revision agreed to by the Oregon Search Dog Council
December 15, 2003	Daren Bledsoe	Removed references to OSDC and Oregon Search Dog Council and replaced them with OSSA or Oregon State Sheriffs' Association. Reformatted documented for PDF creation. No changes made to any K9 standards.

MINIMUM SEARCH DOG TEAM STANDARDS

These "Minimum Search Dog Team Performance Standards" were developed with input from the various SAR Dog Teams within the State of Oregon. The attached standards were approved by the Sheriffs' Search & Rescue Advisory Council, the Sheriffs' Association, and Oregon Emergency Management.

For information regarding testing please contact your local Sheriff's Search and Rescue Representative.

I. Scope

- A. The purpose of this guide is to set forth minimum standards for search dog teams.
- B. Since there are many ways to train and evaluate search dog teams, this is not a training document. Rather, it provides minimum standards of performance for cadaver location, article location, tracking/trailing, area searching and water searching. It will provide search dog teams with an understanding of the basic capabilities of a trained search dog team.

II. Terminology: Description of Terms Specific to this Standard

1. Dog Skills

- a. Alert: An indication from the dog, obvious to the handler, that the dog has detected the search target. This could be physical behavior, body posture, barking, etc.
- b. Article indication: An indication from the dog, obvious to the handler, that an article or subject has been found.
- c. Re-find: The air scenting dog, on finding, returns to the handler and takes the handler back to the subject. Other indications of a find may be appropriate, for example, barking for inaccessible victims, sitting beside an article, etc.
- d. Scent discrimination: The dog's ability to distinguish between the scents of different individuals and to work a specific scent to complete the search problem.
- e. Start at any point of a track: When placed in the general vicinity of the person's travel route, the dog is able to locate the track/trail and proceed in the direction the person took. The dog may be scented to the track if a scent article is unavailable.

- f. Ranging: dog working off-lead is not “underfoot” and works a reasonable distance away from the handler to search for or follow scent.

2. **Handler Skills**

- a. Ability to evaluate conditions and use proper strategy: Handler analyzes all factors that can affect probability of detection; terrain, vegetative cover, weather, wind, etc. to result in the highest probability of detection.
- b. Ability to read the dog’s alert: Handler is able to interpret the response of the dog indicating that the target scent/subject has been detected.
- c. Adequate physical condition: Handler is able to travel adequately and safely in the working environment in which they respond.
- d. Safety awareness: Handler can evaluate hazards, select search routes, and follow safety procedures for the working mode (such as use of personal floatation devices in water searching, etc.).
- e. Oregon State Sheriff’s Association and Oregon Emergency Management, SAR Minimum Standards for SAR personnel: The handler is certified as set forth in the current minimum training standards for search and rescue personnel.

3. Working Modes Definitions

The following definitions apply to the various standards in this document.

- a. **Tracking Dog:** In the strict sense of the term, the dog should indicate almost each of the subject's footsteps. The dog should not vary more than one or two feet from these footsteps.
- b. **Trailing Dog:** This dog is oriented to the skin "rafts" which have drifted to the ground along the person's route. The dog often works some distance from the actual footsteps.
- c. **Air Scenting Dog:** This dog is searching air currents for scent emanating directly from the subject. These dogs may also use ground deposits or airborne scent originating from ground deposits like a trailing dog. An air scenting dog is not expected to discriminate among subjects and can work without being presented a scent article. Air scenting is further subdivided into the following working modes:
 - (1) **Area searching:** The dog searches in the air for human scent, locates the source, and indicates the source to the handler.
 - (2) **Article searching:** The dog searches for, finds, and indicates to the handler, an inanimate object that has human scent coming from it.
 - (3) **Cadaver searching:** The dog searches for, finds, and indicates to the handler, scent coming from deceased human body or parts.
 - (4) **Water searching:** The dog, from shore or from a boat, indicates to the handler, the location on the surface of the water where scent from recent and aged human victim is present on the surface.

III. Evaluations

a. Wilderness Tracking/Trailing Evaluation.

Track/trail a person, not known to handler or dog, that has walked at least 1.5 miles in moderate to rough terrain. An uncontaminated scent article will be provided the handler at the start of the evaluation. The track will be allowed to age overnight a minimum of 12 hours. The dog must be able to take scent from the article and start the track/trail. The dog must work through natural occurring contamination and distractions. The handler must recognize if/when the dog is off the track/trail. At the end of the track/trail the dog must find and take the handler to the subject at the end of the trail.

Subject must be located to pass test.

b. Wilderness Area Search Evaluation

Prior to the test, the handler will describe the dog's alert, his search strategy or plan to the examiner. The test will consist of searching an area of moderate terrain, with light to moderate brush cover, of approximately 160 acres containing 1 subject. The team must complete the search within 4 hours executing the strategy, making adjustments as appropriate and being aware of any safety hazards. Breaks may be taken up to a total of one hour. Breaks do not count towards the 4 hours. The dog must work through natural occurring contamination and distractions and must follow the handler's commands, range well, find and close in on the subject.

Handler must recognize the dog's alert.

The dog must indicate the subject's location.

c. Article Evaluation

Search a wilderness area 300 feet by 300 feet (or equivalent square footage) 6 hot items hidden. K9 must locate 4 hot items within 60 minutes. In this test the 60 minutes is inclusive of K9 reward and break time. The dog must work through natural occurring contamination and distractions. Only one false alert is permitted. Samples (hot items) will be supplied by the Testing Officer and or Examiner. Items will be placed 30 minutes prior to testing under the direct observation of the testing officer and examiner. Samples may include guns (empty), but fired within 24 hours), knives, ammunition (fired and live) wallet, purse or other personnel objects that may be used or carried during a crime. An out of place item handled by a human is not a false alert.

d. Cadaver Evaluation

Search a wilderness area 300 feet by 300 feet (or equivalent square footage) 6 hot items will be hidden and 3 blanks items will be hidden for a total of 9 items. K9 must locate 4 hot items within 60 minutes. In this test the 60 minutes is inclusive of K9 reward and break time. The dog must work through natural occurring contamination and distractions. Only one false alert is permitted. Samples (hot items) will be supplied by the handler being tested. Samples must be able to fit into a 12 inch cylinder tube with a 1 ½ inch diameter. Blank items shall be used to simulate contamination and distractions and will be supplied by the testing officer and/or examiner. These can include, but are not limited to food, tennis balls, dog toys, etc. Items will be placed 30 minutes prior to testing under the direct observation of the testing officer and examiner. Since samples are difficult to obtain, hair, nail clippings, extracted teeth, and when the dog has trained with them, synthetic chemicals such as "pseudo corpse" may be used.

e. Water Evaluation

Search a 300 feet by 300 feet body of water from a boat (or equivalent square footage). 2 samples (hot items) will be placed in the water and 3 blank items (none human contaminated article) for a total of 5 items. K9 must locate 1 hot item within 30 minutes. In this test the 30 minutes is inclusive of K9 reward and break time. The dog must work through natural occurring contamination and distractions. Only one false alert is permitted. Samples will be supplied by the handler being tested. Hot items must be able to fit into a 12 inch cylinder tube with a 1 ½ inch diameter. Blank items shall be used to simulate contamination and distractions and will be supplied by the testing officer and/or examiner. These can include, but are not limited to food, tennis balls, dog toys, etc. Items will be placed 60 minutes prior to testing under the direct observation of the testing officer and examiner. Since samples are difficult to obtain, hair, nail clippings, extracted teeth, and when the dog has trained with them, synthetic chemicals such as "pseudo corpse" may be used. Items will be placed in containers provided by the testing officer and placed in the water at a depth of 4 to 6 feet. (out of sight)

f. Urban Tracking/Trailing Evaluation

Track/Trail a person, unknown to the handler or dog, that has walked at least seven city blocks or equal to ¾ of a mile. There must be a least four 90 degree turns. An uncontaminated scent article will be provided at the start of the test. The track will be aged for a minimum of 3 hours. The dog must be able to take scent from the article and start the track/trail. The dog must work through natural occurring contamination and distractions. The handler must recognize if/when the dog is off the track/trail. At the end of the track the handler will have to indicate which of two individuals is the correct subject. The handler will be allowed two restarts, re-scenting on the track is not considered a restart. A restart is after a handler has gone a substantial distance and returns to the starting point. Each testing area should include cement, asphalt, road crossings, automobile traffic and/or gravel or grass. Casting for scent is not a re-start.

Subject: No description of the subject will be given to the handler.

Definition: Urban is defined as a city or town comprised of streets, sidewalks, residences, businesses, and inhabitants.