

Search and Rescue Council of New Jersey

TRAINING STANDARDS For HUMAN REMAINS DETECTION K-9 SEARCH AND RESCUE DOG and HANDLER

A. Setup

1. The handler and dog must complete the obedience elements referenced in this standard.
2. The handler must have a human remains detection training log completed and present it to his/her unit's Evaluation Officer (or equivalent) prior to requesting an evaluation.
3. Prior to the evaluation, the handler must have completed crime scene preservation training.
4. Efforts shall be made to ensure consistent test conditions for teams within each unit.
5. The handler /dog team will be allowed a specific amount of time to search each test area. The handler will be given a 5 minute warning. The handler may declare an area completed before the allotted time has expired, but having done so may not re-enter the area later to re-search it.
6. The cadaver materials used for this evaluation, hereafter referred to as the positive scent source, will be of human origin (e.g., blood, teeth, hair, tissue, bone, body dirt, etc.). The positive scent source may be placed in a container (e.g., PVC pipe, jar, unscented bag, etc.), attached to article of clothing (e.g., shoes, shirt, etc.) or attached to an instrument that might be used in a crime (e.g., knife, club, hammer, etc.). The types of materials used as well as the vehicles used to contain them will be determined by the evaluator(s).

Note: The safety of the dog is to be taken into account by the evaluator when selecting and placing articles and cadaver material.

B. Field Evaluation

1. The handler/dog team will be given three areas to search. Each area will measure 100 feet by 100 feet and will have marked boundaries. There will be a minimum of 150 feet between areas.
2. Two areas will contain one positive scent source each. One of these positive scent sources will be above ground and one will be buried. The above ground positive scent source will be placed no more than 30 inches above ground level approximately 1 hour prior to the evaluation. The buried positive scent source will be covered by 4 to 6 inches of loose soil and/or vegetation approximately 24 hours prior to the evaluation. The positive scent source may or may not be accessible to the dog (e.g. bones may be placed in a cage in order to preserve the material).
3. The third test area will contain no positive scent source. An empty container (e.g. PVC, bag, etc.) with no cadaver material contamination may be placed in this area.

4. The areas will be presented to the team being evaluate in random order; the team will not be told which areas contain a positive scent source.
5. The test areas will consist of the following:
 - a. land test – wooded sections with small amounts of debris (e.g. thick ground cover, rocks, leaves, dead branches, etc.) and
 - b. one manmade structure.
6. There will be a total of 5 disturbed areas (e.g. false holes) spread across the three search areas.
7. One distraction (non-human scent source such as food or animal remains) will be placed in one of the search areas.
8. The dog will be worked either on or off leash.
9. Upon calling the indication the handler must point to the location of the positive scent source.
10. The handler /dog team will have one attempt of up to 30 minutes duration per area.
11. In order for the team to pass the evaluation:
 - a. The dog must successfully locate and perform its trained indication and the handler must declare a “find” for both positive scent sources.
 - b. The dog must not attempt to eat the positive scent sources or unnecessarily disturb it.
 - c. The search of each area must be completed by the allotted time.

C. Criteria

1. The handler/dog team must successfully complete all three area evaluations for certification in human remains detection. No partial certification is awarded for passing only one of the area evaluations.
2. The dog shall give either a passive or active indication:
 - a. Passive Indication – The dog indicates to the handler the positive scent source through passive means, such as a sit or down.
 - b. Active Indication – The dog indicates to the handler the positive scent source through active means, such as barking, touching, or recall/re-find.
3. The handler must “call” the dog’s indication for a “find” to count. If the handler decides not to call what appears to be an indication by the dog, it will not count as an indication. Only the handler is qualified to interpret his/her dog’s behavior and discern between the dog’s behavior on a distraction as opposed to its behavior on a positive scent source. Upon calling the indication, the handler has committed to declaring a “find.”
4. The dog will be responsive to handler direction and control.
5. The handler must be able to describe the dog’s indication to the evaluators.
6. The handler must effectively communicate to the evaluators that the dog has indicated a positive scent source.
7. The handler cannot assist the dog in the indication.
8. The handler will execute and communicate an effective search strategy.

9. The handler must draw a map of the areas searched, indicating the position of any positive scent source(s).
10. A debriefing will be conducted and should include a description of the weather and search conditions, search areas covered, start and end times, and any other important information.
11. The three areas in this evaluation must be completed in succession on the same day.

D. Proof of the Test

1. If a handler/dog team fails the evaluation because they were unable to locate a positive scent source, the handler may request a dog certified in human remains detection work the area to prove the test.