

## **SUGGESTED STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE TRI-STATE EVALUATIONS**

Individual units who have currently adopted this certification standard are:

**Absaroka Search Dogs / Montana  
Central Montana Search Dogs / Montana  
Great Basin K-9 SAR / Utah  
High Country K-9 / Montana  
Lake County Search Dogs / Montana  
Northwest K-9 / Wyoming  
Salmon River Search Dogs / Idaho  
Western Montana Search Dogs / Montana  
Wyoming K-9 / Wyoming**

**All teams who have adopted this Tri-State Standard must be certified by these standards or standards of higher difficulty. All teams must be evaluated by an operational handler who is certified in that specific discipline and is certified through Tri-State or equal. If a team does not certify to these standards, they will be removed from the Tri-State Standards.**

❖ **SCOPE**

❖ **Purpose:**

- The purposes of these Standards of Performance are to provide:
  - Guidelines to be used for the evaluation of SAR dog teams.
  - Tri-state certification for units who choose to participate in bi-annual testing, allowing evaluations to be conducted in a more consistent manner.
  - A more professional image to law enforcement and requesting agencies, by providing a single, unified documentation guideline.
- These Standards of Performance provide minimum requirements for:
  - ◆ Wilderness Search
  - ◆ Trailing
  - ◆ Cadaver
  - ◆ Human Remains Detection
  - ◆ Water
  - ◆ Evidence

- ◆ Avalanche
- ◆ Building

❖ **Local Responsibility:**

- The training/testing officer for each individual unit is responsible for validating that individual teams have met or exceeded these guidelines before obtaining operational status.

❖ **REQUIRED SKILLS NECESSARY FOR ACTIVE SAR DOG OPERATIONS:**

❖ **Handler Skills:**

- The handler must meet individual unit skills requirements prior to testing the dog.
- The handler must respond to at least one actual search incident, as dog team support, prior to becoming an operational dog team.

❖ **Dog Skills – General:**

- **Adjacent area searching:** The dog must be able to effectively work along side other dog teams without undue distraction.
- **Endurance:** The dog must be able to work a prolonged search while maintaining optimum performance.
- **Night work:** The dog team must show the ability to work without daylight.
- **Wilderness Refind/Alert:** The free-ranging dog must either return to the handler upon making a find and take the handler back to the subject, or the dog must stay and bark. The handler must be able to read either alert.
- **Alert:** In regards to disciplines other than wilderness, other types of alerts are acceptable: i.e., barking, down, sit and dig. The handler must state alert behavior prior to testing and must be able to read alert during the test.
- **Age:** The dog must be at least 12 months of age in order to be fielded for operational status.
- **Temperament:** The dog must be able to operate effectively and non-aggressively in all working situations.
- **Vaccinations:** All dogs must have proof of current required vaccinations.

- **Agility:** Handler must demonstrate, off lead, the ability to safely and confidently control the dog through the following skills:
  - Jump up at least three feet into a specified area.
  - Crawl under an obstacle  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the dog's height.
  - Climb onto, and walk along a log or obstacle 3-4 feet off of the ground and 10 feet in length.
  - Not jump off of area/object until commanded to do so.
  - Walk through a culvert or small tunnel.
  
- **Obedience:**
  - The handler must have off-lead control of the dog at all times.
  - Dogs will not be allowed to approach other dogs while training/searching.
  - Dogs must be responsive to handler commands.
  - Dogs must demonstrate the following:
    - Come – dog must come directly
    - Stop – on recall (dog will go towards handler and when given a command, stop, down or sit within a very short distance (safety issue))
    - Sit
    - Down
    - Stay – 5 minutes with handler out of sight
    - Heel or Close – within 2 feet of handler

#### ❖ **OPERATIONAL EVALUATION**

1. All disciplines must be re-certified every two years.
2. Upon discretion of an evaluator, a test may be stopped at any time if the dog team is seen to have:
  - a) not been ready for testing
  - b) unsatisfactory progress
  - c) no forward progress
3. It will be the responsibility of the training/testing officer within each dog unit, to specify which handlers will participate in the testing process, as evaluators.
4. If a handler who is testing their dog has hesitation as to the evaluator assigned to them, the handler may approach his/her

training/testing officer and request a different evaluator.

5. The handler must verbalize area strategy and dog's indication, prior to each test.
  - **Mini-Area Search:** This must be completed prior to the Wilderness Search test. The area is to be approximately 1/4 by 1/4 mile in moderate terrain containing 3 well-hidden subjects. The search time is limited to 2 hours unless testers extend the time due to weather or terrain concerns. The dog team must find all three subjects. If less than two re-finds or bark alerts are demonstrated, the test is inconclusive and must be repeated. The purpose of this test is to show the reliability of the dog's re-find/bark alert and the strategy skills of the handler. Upon successful completion, the handler may request the Wilderness Search test. The Wilderness Search test must be completed within six months of the Mini-Area test.
  - **Wilderness Search:** In a 1 square mile area of moderate terrain, 1 – 3 subjects will be placed, either hidden or roaming. Subjects will enter area in a manner, which will make it difficult for the dog to cut the track. If a dog cuts a track, and follows it to the subject, this is an acceptable find. There may or may not be a simulated injury when subjects are located. The dog handler will complete an interview with the RP, at the search base, prior to beginning the test. A search strategy must be developed and verbalized to evaluators, prior to the test. The handler will tell the evaluators what the dog's alert will be. Adjustments may be made, considering wind shifts, obstacles, etc. The test team will be expected to communicate with base via radio and relay all pertinent information as well as alerts, clues, finds. After covering the area, the test team will return to the search base and explain percentage of area covered and give POD. The test team will cover the area just as he/she would on an actual search. The test team is expected to cover as much area as possible in three hours. (Remember, it isn't possible to cover the whole area, so segment the area in workable sections.) After handler has completed test, they will be asked what areas, if any, should be searched more thoroughly. Handlers must show on a topographical map which areas were covered, location of alerts and finds. Passing the operational wilderness search test will be a matter of the teams' overall performance, taking all factors into consideration. The team is not expected to locate all subjects. If a dog locates a subject, and does not successfully alert the handler, the evaluators will terminate the test. The focus of this test is on the quality of the search strategy, proficiency in navigating through the search area and the team's ability to search efficiently, for the full duration of the test. After a dog team has completed operational status in wilderness search, the mini-area search will be used for re-certification.

▪ **Trailing Search:**

- **Level 1:** The length of the trail will be at least 1 mile and will be aged not less than 4 hours. The handler is responsible for collecting the scent article. The handler will be given a designated PLS, with area approximately 20 X 20 feet. The PLS will be contaminated by two persons walking away from the PLS in different directions. The subject's trail will be laid in moderate terrain and all attempts will be made so that the dog cannot air scent. The start of the track should have a 360-degree possibility of direction. One cross track will be laid within one hour prior to the test and will be laid after the first third of the actual track. There should be a road crossing, either paved or dirt, in any part of the test. The dog must obtain direction of travel and locate subject for successful completion. It is an acceptable pass if wind change allows the dog to air scent after it has located the direction of travel, has successfully worked through the contamination, and successfully passed the cross track.
  
- **Level 2:** The length of the trail will be at least one mile and will be aged not less than 12 hours. Handler will conduct an interview with RP. The handler is responsible for collecting the scent article. The handler will be given a designated PLS, with area approximately 100 X 100 feet. The PLS will be contaminated by two persons walking away from the PLS in different directions. The subject's trail will be laid in moderate terrain, and all attempts will be made so that the dog cannot air scent. The start of the track should have a 360-degree possibility of direction. One cross track will be laid within one hour prior to the test and will be laid after the first third of the actual track. There should be a road crossing, either paved or dirt, in any part of the test. It is an acceptable pass if wind change allows the dog to air scent after it has located the direction of travel, has successfully worked through the contamination, and successfully passed the cross track.
  
- **Level 3:** The length of the trail will be at least one mile and will be aged not less than 24 hours. Handler will conduct an interview with RP. The handler is responsible for collecting the scent article. The handler will be given a designated PLS, with area approximately 100 X 100 feet. The PLS will be contaminated by two persons walking away from the PLS in different directions. The subject's trail will be laid in moderate terrain, and all attempts will be made so that the dog cannot air scent. The start of the track should have a 360-degree possibility of direction. One cross track will be laid within one hour prior to the test and will be laid after the first third of the actual track. There should be a road crossing, either paved or dirt, in any part of the test. It is an acceptable pass if wind change allows the dog to air scent after it has located the direction of

travel, has successfully worked through the contamination, and successfully passed the cross track.

- **Urban:** A handler may test for operational status in urban search without being operational in Level I or Level II trailing tests.
  
- Handler will conduct an interview with RP. The handler is responsible for collecting the scent article. The handler will be given the PLS of either a residence or vehicle. The area will be contaminated. The trail will be aged not less than 2 hours and will be 6 – 8 blocks in length. The trail will include asphalt, concrete, sidewalks, alleys, grass, etc. There will be at least two street crossings. All day-to-day activities in the area will not cause delay or cancellation of the test. Time limit is 1 hour but may be extended by the evaluators if they deem that there continues to be forward progress. Dog must locate and identify correct subject for completion of test.

- **Cadaver Search:**

This will contain two separate tests. These tests must be completed within 30 days of each other.

- The handler will verbalize search strategy and dog's indication, prior to the test. The area will contain two well- hidden samples with a volume of scent that simulates, as closely as possible, a deceased body. The evaluators will meet and approve of testing sources, prior to any test. The team that is being tested may also request to view the sources to be used for their test. The sources must be concealed extremely well so that the handler is unable to see them. Proper strategy must be used to ensure coverage of the entire search area. Dog team will search an area 100 X 100 yards, or equivalent square footage, in moderate terrain. One sample will be on the surface. The second sample will be buried 4 – 6 inches. The dog must be able to locate both samples within 1 hour. The handler must call a find by recognizing the dog's indication behavior as stated prior to the test. False holes will be present. Scent rise time will be not less than 2 hours.

After completing this test, the dog team will search for human bones. This test will have bones set up in a line or scattered in a small area. The handler will determine how far apart the bones will be placed. The lineup may contain all animal, all human, or a combination of both. The handler must be able to identify the human bone(s) by the dog's behavior.

Cadaver search test must be successfully completed prior to testing for Human Remains Detection.

▪ **Human Remains Detection Search:**

- This will contain two separate tests. These two tests must be completed within 30 days of each other.
  - 1. Dog team will search three separate areas, 100 X 100 feet each, or equivalent square footage, in moderate terrain. The search strategy and the dog's indication must be verbalized prior to the test. Two of the areas will contain a total of fourteen samples. One of the areas will contain no samples. Blood and bone will be used for eight of the fourteen samples. There will be animal bones present. There will be false holes present. For successful completion, the dog must locate ten out of fourteen samples, without disturbing samples, with no more than one false alert. Handler will have 30 minutes per area to complete the test, unless evaluators extend the time due to weather or terrain concerns. Special care must be given while setting this test up, due to the subtle nature of the samples..
  - 2. Dog team will search one room in a building, no larger than 20' x 20'. Three samples will be in the room. The samples will be blood and/or tissue. The handler must locate 2 of 3 samples for completion. Dog must not disturb samples.

▪ **Evidence Search:**

- Dog team will search an area 200 X 200 feet, or equivalent square footage, in moderate terrain. Three articles will be well hidden on the surface or hanging, but not buried. A variety of articles will be used, including but not limited to: metal, plastic, and cloth. All three articles must be found within 1 hour. Scent rise time will be no less than 30 minutes. Handler must state crime scene preservation procedures.

▪ **Water Search:**

There are 2 separate tests for certification: shore and open water  
After a team passes one of the tests, they will be certified for that type of water search.

- **Shore:** The dog team will search a stream or shore line, approximately 100 yards in length. A scent source will be placed 5-10 feet off the shoreline and will be 2 - 10 inches deep. The dog may indicate from the shore, or in the water, as long as handler can describe the location of the scent source within 15 yards. Scent rise time will be no less than 15 minutes.
  
- **Boat:** The team will perform an open water search. This will be done from a boat, in an area approximately 3 – 4 acres. A scent source will be used for the open water search. There will be no divers used for this certification. Scent source will be placed approximately 15 feet under water surface. The team will be tested on the strategy used to search the area, how efficiently the dog handler communicates to the boat operator and how efficiently the handler can read the dog alerts at the subject's location. The handler must be able to define a search area for the divers. This area must be within 100 feet of scent source . Handler will plot location on map and explain what effects the wind and current may have on the scent. Scent rise time will be no less than 15 minutes.

### **Avalanche Search:**

- Handler will conduct an interview with the RP prior to testing. Dog team will search an area no less than 150 X 150 feet that has been adequately tracked up/contaminated to hide ski tracks and holes. Other searchers will actively be searching the area.
  
- **Initial Certification:** There will 1 or 2 live victim(s) and four scented articles placed in the test area. For successful completion during the initial certification, the team must locate all the live victim(s) and 1 or 2 articles (for a total of 3 finds). The victim(s) must be hidden at a depth of 2 - 5 feet. Victim will enter the area in a manner making it difficult for the dog to track to the cave. Minimum scent rise time is 15 minutes for the live victim, and 1 hour for the articles. The longer the rise time for the articles, the deeper they can be buried.
  - The optimal way to place articles for tests are as follows: Place articles the day before if possible, use large articles (such as shirts, pants, scarves, gloves), when placing the article in the snow be sure to have the article opened up to full size, place blocks of snow on the articles to cover and then throw snow over the blocks to cover up the blocks (just like covering up live victims...with blocks covering the holes and snow thrown over the blocks), if this method is used you can bury the articles 1-3 feet deep, otherwise they should be buried 2-6 inches.
  - The test area will have false holes. The team will be given ½ - 1 hour to work the area, depending on size and terrain.
  
- **Re-certification:** May be set up as above or:

- If there isn't enough snow for live victims, the testers will place four articles in the test area. If only articles are placed they must find 3 of the 4 articles. If possible, the articles that are used on the test should have been worn by people not setting up the test area and not hiding the articles. Handler must also accurately describe all areas that were searched and give a POD for the area. The test area will have false holes. People in the area will be placed so they will not clue the dog and handler.
- All of the following safety precautions will be observed for a live burial: 1. Victim must have a radio and transceiver. Both must be in a position to be easily activated. 2. Victim location is to be marked and watched by an observer with a radio and transceiver.

- **Building Search:**

- One to three victims will hide in a large building at least 15 minutes prior to the test. All victims must be found within designated time limit.

❖ \*\*\* Due to the complexity of the building search, specifics will be discussed prior to testing.

❖ Revised: February, 2006

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