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OPERATIONS MANUAL

STANDARD INSTRUCTION 02

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I. PURPOSE

This document establishes operational policies and procedures for the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Canine Search Program administered through California Task Force 8 (CA-TF8) and its sponsoring agency, the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department (SDFD).

II. SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all sworn San Diego Fire-Rescue Department (SDFD) personnel, excluding lifeguards.

III. AUTHORITY

The fire chief authorizes the information within this policy.

IV. DEFINITIONS

A. Canine

A National Disaster Search Dog Foundation (NDSDF) approved canine is specially trained, has met all Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) National USAR and California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) requirements, and has received written approval from CA-TF8 and SDFD. Canines are at no time considered property of the City of San Diego, SDFD, CA-TF8, or the Canine Search Specialist (CSS).

B. Canine Coordinator

An approved member of CA-TF8 assigned to assist with the training and administration of the canine search teams. The canine coordinator reports to the CA-TF8 program manager.

C. Canine Search Specialist (CSS)

An SDFD and CA-TF8 member who is specially trained and is responsible for all training, veterinary care, and welfare of a canine. CSS and “canine handler” may be used interchangeably.

D. Canine Search Team (CST)

A search team consisting of a canine and CSS, that is certified by the National Disaster Search Canine Readiness Evaluation process, FEMA, and Cal OES. CSTs are designed to support local, regional, state, national and international search operations as single resources or as a component of CA-TF8.

E. Canine Search Team Trainee (CST-T)

A team consisting of a canine and handler that is undergoing training but has not yet been certified according to the National Disaster Search Canine Readiness Evaluation process, FEMA, and CAL OES.

F. Canine Vehicle

Vehicle suitable for carrying a canine team to emergency and non-emergency activities.

G. National Disaster Search Dog Foundation (NDSDF)

A non-profit organization that owns, trains, supervises, and assigns canines to qualified task force canine handlers.

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V. **POLICY**

This policy covers the components of the canine search program based upon both SDFD and California-Task Force 8 (CA-TF8) mission and operational objectives.

SDFD and CA-TF8 Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Canine Program provides canine search capabilities for structural collapse and other missions.

Participation in the program is strictly voluntary. NDSDF remains the sole owner of the canines until their retirement. The NDSDF may take the dog back from the handler at any time.

After the canine retires, the CSS has the option of adopting the dog or having the NDSDF place the dog.

A. **Duties and Responsibilities**

1. USAR Program Manger
 - a. The overall supervision of the USAR Canine Program is the responsibility of the USAR program manager or designee.
2. CA-TF8 Canine Coordinator
 - a. The overall responsibility of management of training and certification of the Canine Search Team is the CA-TF8 canine coordinator.
3. SDFD Company Officers
 - a. SDFD company officers will make every effort to ensure the canines are integrated into the station environment and defuse concerns about the presence of the canine.
 - b. Unresolved concerns or issues shall be forwarded through the chain of command to the USAR program manager.
4. Media and Demonstrations
 - a. Media and demonstration requests for the Canine Search Team are the responsibility of the CA-TF8 program manager and must comply with the city and department's social media policy.
5. CA-TF8
 - a. It is the responsibility of CA-TF8 to:
 - 1) Provide the CST with an approved kennel to house the canine while at their assigned fire station and home.
 - 2) The primary kennel location should be an area of the fire station that is temperature controlled and secure or a location mutually agreed upon by the CSS and station captain(s).
 - a) At no time shall the canine be left unattended in an unsecured area inside or outside of the station.
 - 3) To provide food for the canine, funding for veterinary care, and furnish all personal protective equipment (PPE) and canine related equipment to the CSS.

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6. Canine Search Specialist/Canine Search Specialist Trainee
 - a. Duties include:
 - 1) Care for, train, and always maintain control of the canine.
 - 1) Daily canine care and training shall not interfere with the normal routine of the station or station personnel.
 - 2) All canine activities will be performed during times and locations approved by the on-duty captain.
 - 3) Examples of daily care include washing the canine, trimming nails, properly disposing of dog waste.
 - a) Canine care and training activities will not affect emergency responses.
 - b. The CST may perform search type training only if approved by the on-duty captain.
 - 1) Canine must always be on leash
 - c. Groom and inspect the canine daily
 - d. Maintain and clean kennel and provide fresh drinking water
 - e. Ensure the physical well-being of the canine is maintained
 - f. Maintain all training records, licensing, vaccinations, veterinary visits, and certifications
 - 1) Submit records monthly to CA-TF8 training manager
 - g. Ensure that the CA-TF8 program office has a copy of all documents related to the canine handler including emergency contact and temporary alternate canine care provider
 - h. Complete all reimbursement forms and forward them to the USAR program manager or appropriate designee within the prescribed timelines
 - i. Keep USAR program manager and canine coordinator informed of status changes (for example, injuries, illness, etc.) of the CST
 - j. Address concerns regarding the CST through the chain of command to the USAR program manager
 - k. Attend authorized canine events, trainings, and other activities scheduled and/or approved by the USAR program manager
 - l. Adhere to all policies and procedures set forth by SDFD, CA-TF8, and the NDSDF
 - m. Perform all SDFD regularly assigned duties, training, and responsibilities
 - n. The CSS shall not be held financially responsible for the repair of any damage the canine may create to city property

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7. General Requirements and Expectations
 - a. The canine will live within the handler's house among family members and will be treated as a professional team member
 - b. The canine will report to duty along with the CSS
 - c. The CSS is expected to adhere to a rigid training schedule, as defined by the canine coordinator and NDSDF
 - 1) Monthly search training drills occur a minimum of four times a year for certified teams and eight times a year for trainees
 - 2) Obedience, command, and directional training should occur six out of seven days a week
 - d. Any CSS, who mistreats, abuses, or mishandles the canine at any time and in any way will be subjected to an investigation that may lead to disciplinary action and removal of canine by NDSDF
 - e. The canine shall only be fed dog food purchased by CA- TF8 and approved by the Canine Coordinator and NDSDF
 - 1) Food will be purchased in advance by CA-TF8
 - f. CSS will commit a minimum of nine years to the CA-TF8 Canine program
 - g. CSS may "opt out" of the nine-year commitment for reasons mutually agreed to by SDFD, CA-TF8, and NDSDF
 - h. CSS will maintain a level of fitness for duty per SDFD and CA- TF8 policies
8. Canine Selection Process
 - a. Canines will be selected and pre-trained by the NDSDF
9. Canine search specialist selection process
 - a. As positions for canine search specialist become available, the CA-TF8 program manager will release a recruitment bulletin to employees of SDFD and CA-TF8 participating agencies.
 - b. SDFD applicants must be employed for a minimum of one year, have a satisfactory or above standard Employee Performance Report (EPR) during the last rating period and not be on any Performance Development Plans (PDP) or sustained discipline at time of application.
 - c. The USAR program manager and the CA-TF8 canine coordinator will review the application and letters of interest to determine if the candidate is qualified to continue the process.
 - d. All qualified applicants will then be required to attend a minimum of 10 canine training sessions on their own time as an observer so the applicant can become familiar with the canine training process.
 - e. All qualified individuals will proceed to an interview process.
 - 1) The interview panel will consist of representatives from the NDSDF.

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- f. Selected applicants take an introductory canine search specialist training course prior to receiving a canine.

B. Canine Training

1. General

- a. CSS will accept full responsibility to train the canine to pass the FEMA and Cal OES certification in 18 months from the time the CSS and canine are partnered.
- b. CST will undergo a series of internal evaluations at the discretion of the canine search coordinator.
 - 1) These evaluations will be considered proficiency evaluations and serve to troubleshoot any potential problems and seek ways to remedy them.
 - 2) The CST will attend the FEMA Canine Search Team class at the first available funded by CA-TF8 opportunity.
- c. The USAR training manager will review all CST training logs on a quarterly basis.
- d. CST will attend 80% of all scheduled trainings unless excused by the CA-TF8 canine coordinator.
- e. A training calendar will be made available to keep all CSS's advised of the location and times of training.
- f. Canines may be given special additional training provided by CA-TF8 and SDFD such as helicopter or boat transportation training, rope rescue training, etc.
- g. The CSS will expose the canine to various environmental surroundings as prescribed by NDSDF.
- h. On-duty training shall be done in accordance with CA-TF8 and SDFD polices.
 - 1) Typically, this training can be provided in several short duration sessions that will not impact the station routine or emergency responses.

2. Certification of Canines

- a. To meet National USAR Program mandates, all CA-TF8 canines must meet FEMA and Cal OES Type I certification for deployment.
 - 1) A canine coordinator may request a non-certified canine team to be deployed alongside the coordinator for training purposes with the approval of the CA-TF8 program manager and the requesting agency.
 - 2) Attendance at any certification will only occur after the canine has successfully completed a FEMA USAR Fundamental Skills Assessment (FSA).
 - 3) The CA-TF8 canine coordinator will coordinate with the USAR program manager the scheduling of the FSA.

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- 4) A CA-TF8 canine that has successfully completed an FSA shall be cleared to participate in selected National Task Force Canine Certification.
 - b. Should a canine be on the team for a period of one year and not successfully complete an FSA, the CST will be evaluated by the task force canine coordinator and a representative of the NDSDF to identify training deficiencies and recommendations to enhance the CST's performance.
 - 1) If after three additional months of training the canine is still unsuccessful in completing the mandatory FSA, the CA-TF8 canine coordinator and the NDSDF shall identify if the canine has the ability to pass the FSA.
 - a) This recommendation will be forwarded to the CA-TF8 program manager in writing.
 - 2) The CA-TF8 program manager will review the recommendation and forward a recommendation to the canine coordinator and the NDSDF to determine the future and disposition of the canine within the program.
 - 3) At this time a handler may be given the opportunity by the USAR program manager and NDSDF to be paired with another canine.
- C. Canines at the Fire Station
1. The canine must maintain all current vaccinations before being allowed to enter the fire station.
 2. Canine Housing
 - a. Only CA-TF8 approved CST canines and department-approved canines-in-training are authorized to be housed at the handler's assigned duty location.
 - b. The station will provide clean, healthy, and appropriate conditions for canines.
 - a. Canines will not live outside of the station or on the apparatus floor.
 - b. The CSS and station captain(s) will determine the appropriate location of kenneling.
 - c. If there are concerns regarding the appropriate location of the kennel, the chain of command will be utilized for resolution.
 - d. The canine will be confined to crate or kennel unless under the direct supervision of their handler during training or socializing.
 - e. When multiple canines are housed at the same station, each canine will be provided their own kennel.
 3. Canines will not be removed from their secured location by anyone except the handler unless instructed to do so by the handler.
 4. Canines will not be left unattended without being confined in a kennel.
 5. Canines may be allowed common areas of the fire station after approval from the on-duty captain.

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6. Canines shall not be permitted in the sleeping areas or upon any furniture.
7. Maintenance
 - a. All canine handlers MUST:
 - 1) Clean up after their canine immediately after the canine relieves themselves.
 - 2) Clean and maintain the area designated for the canine to reduce any debris, odors or nuisances caused by the canine.
 - b. The canine will be well groomed, brushed, clean, and free of any foul smell.
 - c. The handler will clean and stow all canine related equipment at the end of their shift.
8. Control
 - a. When the CSS is dispatched on a non-canine related incident, the canine will be confined in their kennel or will be left in care of another handler for extended incidents.
 - b. An approved collar or vest will always be kept on the canine except when under the direct control of handler or when confined in a kennel.
9. Issues
 - a. If a living condition issue develops within the station, the handler will address the issue in a timely manner by:
 - 1) First discussing issue with their immediate supervisor.
 - 2) If the situation is not resolved or the supervisor agrees the issue needs to be addressed at a higher level, the CSS will submit a letter through the chain of command to the CA-TF8 program manager.
10. Non-Canine SDFD Personnel
 - a. Non-canine handlers will not:
 - 1) Discipline canines
 - 2) Feed canines unless directed to do so by the handler
 - 3) Tease, strike, or agitate canines
 - 4) Remove canine from kennel unless instructed to do so by the handler

D. Injuries

1. If the CSS is injured during on-duty training, normal department reporting procedures shall be followed.
2. If the CSS is injured with canine training off-duty, immediately report through the USAR chain of command to the CA-TF8 program manager.
 - a. The CSS shall update the CA-TF8 program manager as to the current deployment status of the canine team.

E. Veterinarian Services

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1. Canines are required to have an annual physical and routine veterinarian care by a CA-TF8 identified veterinarian.
2. The canine handler will contact the CA-TF8 program manager for emergency hospital issues:
 - b. If off duty, the canine handler will go to the pre-identified contract emergency hospital.
 - c. If out of the area, the CSS will contact the designed CA-TF8 representative and request approval for veterinary care.
3. If the canine is seriously injured, the CSS will be placed on special assignment to attend to canine immediate needs.

F. Deployment

1. General Deployment
 - a. The CST must meet the FEMA basic certification level before being deployable
 - a. The CST or CST-T may be dispatched or utilized on actual incidents for training purposes, with the approval of the CA-TF8 program manager through the canine coordinator
 - b. Final decisions on the use of the canine shall always be at the discretion of the handler
 - c. The CST may be requested and deployed (outside the City of San Diego) either through the county mutual aid or master mutual aid with approval of the deputy chief of emergency operations and CA-TF8 program manager
 - 1) The requesting agency must have legal jurisdiction and responsibility for the search mission
 - d. It is recommended that anytime a CST is requested, a CA-TF8 search team manager also be dispatched
 - e. Notifications should be made to CA-TF8 program manager
 - f. Unless directed otherwise, the CST shall respond no-code
2. Canine Non-Deployment Criteria
 - a. The Canine Search Team will not be used for:
 - 1) Criminal suspects
 - 2) Evidence
 - 3) Incendiary devices or explosives
 - 4) WMD
 - 5) Hazmat
 - 6) Structure fires – Accelerant Detection
 - 7) Known deaths or human remains
3. Deployment Information Request
 - a. The following info will be requested for the deployment of the Canine Search Team:

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- 1) Identity of requesting agency
- 2) Contact person
- 3) Address or location of response
- 4) Map Page
- 5) Type of search requested
- 6) Possible hazards at scene
- 7) Radio Channels

b. Victim Information (if known):

- 1) Number of victims
- 2) Age
- 3) Sex
- 4) Medical/physical condition
- 5) Clothing last worn

4. The CSS shall bring the following:

a. Required Documentation

- 1) CA-TF8 identification for both handler and canine
- 2) Health certification
- 3) Travel letter from the sponsoring Task Force referencing travel information and stating the reason for driving or flying

b. Required Attire

- 1) CA-TF8 uniform and PPE for the handler
- 2) FEMA vest or other identification vest for the canine
- 3) Collar and leash

G. Travel Considerations

1. General

- a. During official travel, under no circumstances will a CA-TF8 canine be left outside of an approved container or vehicle, for any period of time, without being supervised by a canine handler.
- b. To promote the utmost professional appearance, the handler must travel in a uniform specified by CA-TF8.
- c. The uniform will be clean and neat without rips, tears, or stains.
 - 1) CA-TF8 will provide uniforms and replace when necessary.
- d. At no time will open-toe, open-back, or sandals be allowed.
- e. The CA-TF8 canine will always be secured during travel.

2. Ground Transportation

- a. The canine will travel in an approved, secured crate at all times.
- b. The handler must adhere to all California Vehicle Code laws, the City of San Diego, and CA-TF 8 driving policies.
- c. SDFD will make available a canine vehicle, which provides adequate and safe transportation for the canine, as provided by an approved budget.

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- d. Canines may not be left in a vehicle for extended periods unless the vehicle is equipped with a climate control system.
- e. When the outside temperature reaches 80 degrees Fahrenheit or greater, consideration must be made to check on the canine on regular intervals.
- f. The canine vehicle must be secured to prevent access from the outside into the container area.
- g. This vehicle must be large enough (full size SUV or pick-up truck) to accommodate an approved crate(s) for transportation of the canine(s).
 - 1) The crate(s) shall be secured to the vehicle to prevent it from sliding around.
- h. Should the canine and crate be stored inside, the vehicle will be equipped with a temperature and carbon monoxide (CO) monitoring system, which sounds an alarm, notifying the handler before an unsafe temperature or CO level is reached inside the vehicle.
- i. The vehicle assigned to the canine team must accommodate all equipment required for training and maintenance of the canine, along with any other equipment needed by the CST.
- j. This vehicle may be utilized for any official SDFD and CA-TF8 canine events, mobilizations or training.
- k. Canines are not allowed on fire suppression apparatus unless pre-approved by the deputy chief of emergency operations and USAR program manager.
 - 1) Canine must be secured in an approved crate while aboard the fire apparatus and adhere to all SDFD and CA-TF8 policies.

3. **Air Transportation**

- a. The individual booking the air travel should inform the airline that they will be traveling with a search canine.
- b. The canine will not be transported in the cargo area of the airplane.
- c. The canine is always to be kept on a leash while in the airport and on the airplane.
- d. The canine must be aired prior to going through security.

4. **Hotel Accommodations**

- a. The individual booking the hotel accommodations must advise the hotel that a search canine will be staying in the room.

H. **Dispatch and Response Procedures**

- 1. Request for search canine response may be initiated by:
 - a. Incident command
 - b. Structure collapse if ECDC confirms one or more people trapped in a collapse
 - c. Another fire agency request (requires deputy chief of emergency operations approval)

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- d. Special operations
 2. K9NOT is assigned to a current incident, or incident is created with nature/problem "USAR Search K9" and K9NOT added
 3. Upon dispatch, canine group supervisor will:
 - a. Contact incident command on assigned command channel to determine needs
 - b. Notify ECDC of units to add to the response
 1. The following members make up the K9NOT:
 - a. DEP7
 - b. B32
 - c. K91
 - d. K92
 - e. K93
 - f. K94
 - g. K95
 - h. K96
 2. Canine Coordinator
 - a. Responds to large complex incidents as the search team manager (STM)
 - b. Determines which canine units to respond
 3. Canine Group Supervisor
 - a. CA-TF8 canine coordinator approves units to respond as canine group supervisor
 - b. Ensure Dep7 and B32 are notified and updated as needed
 - c. Responds to incident
 - d. Coordinates the response and deployment with the incident commander and canine coordinator
 - e. Coordinates logistical needs
 4. Canine units are available when the handler is both on and off-duty
 5. CA-TF8 canine coordinator will respond as search team manager
 6. Dep7, or their designee, is responsible for ensuring proper notifications are made
- I. Retirement / Termination of Handler / Canine Partnership
1. General
 - a. The canine can be considered retired by the NDSDF under the following conditions:
 - 1) 10 years of age
 - 2) Health issues leading to a career ending injury or illness of the canine.
 - a) CA-TF8 contract veterinarian will have the final say if an injury or illness is career ending for the canine.

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- 3) Any other reason deemed necessary by the NDSDF
 - 1) The current handler will have first choice to adopt the canine from the NDSDF once the canine is retired.
2. If a handler wishes to leave the canine program prior to the canine's retirement date, the canine will be relinquished to the NDSDF for re-assignment with a new handler/trainer, if the NDSDF feels the canine can make the adjustment.
 3. Removal as a Canine Search Specialist
 - a. A CSS may be removed from the program at the discretion of NDSDF through the USAR Program Manager if investigations find any of the following to be true:
 - 1) Abuse, neglect, or lack of medical care for the canine
 - 2) Failure to achieve DHS/FEMA certification within 18 months of getting the canine
 - 3) Failure to attend 80% of required CST training during a 12-month period
 - 4) Failure to adhere to FEMA, NDSDF, SDFD, City of San Diego, or CA-TF8 policies or procedures
 - 5) Any other reason deemed necessary by the NDSDF or CA-TF8 program manager.
 4. If the CST is removed from the USAR program or leaves the program voluntary, the canine will be returned to the NDSDF and will be re-assigned appropriately in accordance with the NDSDF and CA-TF8.