

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY  
MANAGEMENT  
SEARCH AND RESCUE PROGRAM

STANDARDS FOR VIRGINIA  
FIRST RESPONDER  
CANINE TEAMS

July 2007

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## **PREREQUISITES**

In order to be eligible to test to become a certified "Virginia First Responder Canine Team" the handler shall:

- a) Be 18 years of age.
- b) Be an active member in good standing of a Canine Search and Rescue group currently operating under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Emergency Management in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- c) Be one of the following:
  - 1) Operational wilderness air scent search team.
  - 2) Operational FEMA Type I disaster canine team.
- d) Have no felony convictions.
- e) Provide current canine team training log.
- f) Provide documentation of current canine immunizations

## **TERMINOLOGY**

The definitions listed here are for the purpose of these standards only. They may or may not reflect the definitions used by other individuals, groups, or agencies.

- 1) **Air scent dog** - A canine that will detect airborne human scent.
- 2) **Aggressive Canine Behavior** - Biting or lunging and growling at people or other controlled animal.
- 3) **Alert** - The canine's response, recognizable to the handler, to its detection of human scent.
- 4) **Area search** - Search of a designated or defined area. The area could be urban, suburban, rural or building.
- 5) **Critical Incident Stress**- Natural emotional reaction to destruction, injury and death related to a disaster environment.
- 6) **First Responder Canine**- An air scent dog that searches in rubble or debris, such as collapsed buildings and debris piles that are a result of natural or man-made disasters.
- 7) **Disaster Search** - Search for humans in rubble or debris, such as collapsed buildings and debris piles that are a result of natural or man-made disasters.
- 8) **Event** – Training, mission, test or other activity, where search teams may gather.
- 9) **Good Samaritan Law**- Any person who, in good faith, renders emergency medical care or assistance to an injured person at the scene of an accident or other emergency without the expectation of receiving or intending to receive reward or financial compensation, shall not be liable for any act or omission, excluding gross negligence, in the course of such care or assistance, providing they do not exceed their training and do not abandon a patient once care has begun. Good Samaritan Laws do not prevent subjects from filing civil suits and do not take the burden of proof away from the responder.
- 10) **Group** - The organization that a team represents.
- 11) **Handler** - The person who controls and directs a canine during a search.
- 12) **Heeling** - The canine walking with the handler, on command, at the handler's side, either on or off lead.
- 13) **Incident Commander**- Responsible for the overall on-scene management of an emergency incident

- 14) **Indication** - Canine's trained method of communicating to the handler that the subject or scent source has been found.
- 15) **MOU** - Memorandum of Understanding.
- 16) **Operational Handler** – An individual who has completed the requirements of an operational team in any canine discipline in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- 17) **Operational Team** – One trained handler and one trained canine that have passed all requirements set forth by these standards as a team and have been issued a certification by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.
- 18) **Probability of Detection (POD)** - The percentage of probability that if a subject was in the search area that they would have been located (detected) by the search effort.
- 19) **Refind** - When the canine has made a find, it returns to the handler and directs the handler back to the subject.
- 20) **Rural** - Country often given to farming or to woodland and sparsely to moderately populated.
- 21) **SAR**- Search and Rescue.
- 22) **Scent discriminating dog** - A search dog that will locate the scent of a specific individual.
- 23) **Team**- consists of a trained handler and a trained canine.
- 24) **Urban, suburban** - Moderately to heavily populated areas given primarily to business and residential development.
- 25) **VDEM** – Virginia Department of Emergency Management.
- 26) **Wilderness** - An area generally uncultivated and uninhabited, and often inaccessible by road.

## SCOPE

- a) These standards are intended to define the minimum requirements for a first responder air scent canine search team.
- b) The First Responder Canine Team should be able to perform the following functions in the general environment of the Commonwealth of Virginia:
  - 1) Search for missing persons in a disaster environment in rural, suburban, and urban areas.
  - 2) Assist with the evaluation, organization and investigation of missing person incidents.
- c) The team should be capable of performing these functions anytime of the year, day or night, and in all weather conditions experienced in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The team may work with a variety of individuals and organizations, including law enforcement, fire and rescue, emergent volunteers and family members of the missing subject(s). In order to do this the handler shall:
  - 1) Understand the tactical search and rescue system used in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
  - 2) Understand the theory and practice of missing person search as it pertains to disasters.
  - 3) Plan, execute, debrief and document a variety of canine search tasks.
  - 4) Navigate safely and accurately on uneven surfaces.
  - 5) Survive an unexpected emergency.
- d) These standards do not address any particular breed of canine since many breeds can be trained to do search work. However, it is important that First Responder canines have the stamina and agility to search in all kinds of weather and terrain. In addition, the canine must be sociable and controllable in situations involving crowds, noise, other canines, and a variety of distractions.

## **HANDLER KNOWLEDGE AND PERFORMANCE** **EXPECTATIONS**

Handler shall demonstrate knowledge of the items listed under each subject and the ability to perform the skills listed. Specific tests designed for this purpose are described in “TEST METHODS”, and are included as part of these standards.

### **1) SAR Operations**

- a) Understand how state missions are originated.
- b) List several resources that might be utilized during a disaster event.
- c) Demonstrate the ability to develop basic search dog assignments for a search incident and provide appropriate recommendations for additional resource support to the incident.
- d) Understand the functions of these field team positions:
  - 1) Incident Commander
  - 2) Team Managers
- e) Understand operational standards and protocols for interactions with law enforcement, fire service personnel, the family of the missing subject(s) and the media.
- f) Understand general safety considerations in disaster operations, including critical incident stress management.

### **2) Legal Aspects of Search and Rescue**

- a) Understand SAR responsibilities at the state level.
- b) Understand several methods of reducing liability exposure.
- c) Understand the circumstances when entry upon private property may be justified.

### **3) Equipment**

Understand the basic principals of clothing and equipment selection for the disaster environment. See APPENDIX K for personal equipment guidelines.

#### 4) Scent Transport Theory

Understand the following scent transport concepts:

- 1) Lofting
- 2) Pluming
- 3) Fumigating
- 4) Coning
- 5) Looping
- 6) Fanning

#### 5) Land Navigation

- a) Define the following terms or concepts:
  - 1) True north, Grid north, and magnetic north
  - 2) Declination
- b) Read and interpret topographic map border information, colors, and symbols.
- c) Demonstrate how to use a compass to plot a course on a map.
- d) Draw a map of an area searched.
- e) Perform the following navigational functions:
  - 1) Obtain and follow a simple compass bearing.
  - 2) Determine a reciprocal.
  - 3) Navigate around obstacles.
  - 4) Measure distance by pacing.
  - 5) Determine position by terrain feature identification.
  - 6) Determine position using UTM coordinates on a map.
- f) Describe how to use these land navigation concepts:
  - 1) Catching features
  - 2) Collecting features
  - 3) Aiming off

**6) Search Skills**

- a) Demonstrate an understanding of building and rubble search tactics in a disaster environment.
- b) Given a search dog task, discuss and demonstrate the ability to plan the task considering wind direction and other weather conditions, visibility, terrain or structure characteristics.
- c) Demonstrate the ability to perform the task planned in B.
- d) Demonstrate the ability to translate field activity onto a map, including route taken, areas searched and not searched, alerts, clues located, wind direction, times for all of the above.
- e) Demonstrate the ability to accurately debrief the task, providing the debriefer has all of the information listed in (6-A thru D).

**7) Clue and Site Procedures**

- a) Describe the proper approach to a disaster site.
- b) Explain the importance of accurate subject location.
- c) Describe methods to mark areas searched and subjects found.

**8) Helicopter Operations**

- a) Understand the hazards to ground personnel working around a helicopter.
- b) Understand the proper approach to a helicopter, including direction of approach and communication with the crew.

**9) Field Communications**

- a. Define the common problems associated with the field use of portable radios and list some possible solutions.
- b. Describe basic radio procedures.

**10) First Aid****Canine**

- a) The handler must recognize and, if possible, know how to treat the following:
  - 1) Excessive bleeding
  - 2) Hyperthermia
  - 3) Bloat
  - 4) Shock
  - 5) Dehydration
- b) The handler must know which human medications carried in his pack may be shared with the canine and which may not.
- c) Handler must demonstrate proper assessment of canine after working in disaster area.

**11) Additional Required Training**

- a) Each Handler will be required to complete courses below:
  - 1) Field Team Member or state approved equivalent
  - 2) Basic First Aid with CPR.
  - 3) Ropes I
  - 4) Hazmat Awareness
  - 5) Confined Space Awareness
  - 6) Structural Collapse Awareness

**1) Ropes I:**

Students in this course will be introduced to the various types of rope and related rescue equipment. Students will be training in tying of basic knots and hitches used in rope rescue, basic rappelling techniques, tie-offs, self-rescue, basic litter tie-ins, and basic litter handling skills. Much of the program is hands-on and time is allotted for practice in order to build proficiency.

**2) Hazmat Awareness:**

This is the basic course in the Hazardous Materials training series. Instruction covers identification of Hazmat problems, gathering basic information and assessment on the nature of the incident, and reporting requirements necessary to begin the mitigation process.

**3) Confined Space Awareness:**

Students will learn plans of operation, tools, manpower, and manipulation skills required to perform safe removal of victims from limited space confinement. Emphasis is placed on safety and the psychological effects of confined space rescue. Students will participate in team rescue scenarios.

**4) Structural Collapse Awareness:**

This program is designed to teach emergency response personnel how to maintain the integrity of structurally unstable elements. Specifically, students will learn how to: Properly transmit or redirect various collapse loads to stable ground or other suitable structural elements that are capable of withstanding additional loading; conduct a proper shoring size-up. Identify locations for proper shoring placement; Identify the different positions within a shoring team summarize the purpose of position; identify the different types of shoring components and equipment; Conduct proper hazard mitigation activities.

## **CANINE PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS**

The objectives of the behavior, obedience, and agility evaluations are to help ensure that both the canine and the handler can work together as a team safely, efficiently and in conjunction with other teams and personnel.

The canine will demonstrate compliance with the expectations of this section. Specific tests designed for this purpose are described in “TEST METHODS”, and are included as part of these standards.

### **1) Behavior:**

#### **Aggression**

Each handler shall be responsible for assuring his or her canine does not exhibit aggressive canine behavior, or the canine shall not be eligible for certification.

#### **Policy**

- a) Aggressive canine behavior toward people or other canines shall not be considered acceptable behavior.
- b) A canine must allow another person to move it to a different location in the absence of its owner. The canine must not show aggression.

#### **Repercussions**

Following an unprovoked attack on a person or controlled canine, the offending canine will be removed from the event area and will not be allowed to participate in any future events outside their own team training, until such time as a state evaluator reviews the incident and deems the canine fit to continue.

All such unprovoked attacks must be documented. Documentation shall include the date and time of the incident, a description of what happened including all parties and animals involved, and signatures by at least one witness and the person filing the report.

**2) Obedience:**

The canine must be under the control of the handler at all times, capable of heeling through crowds and non-aggressive to both people and other canines. The canine, for its safety, must be responsive to an emergency stop command. The long down/stay evaluates the reliability and calmness of the canine when the handler is not in sight.

**3) Agility:**

In order to safely search for subjects, the canine must acquire certain specific skills to safely traverse a variety of obstacles, surfaces and terrain.

**4) Direction and Control:**

In order to search areas that the handler may not access or to avoid hazardous areas, the canine must demonstrate the ability to be directed and controlled by the handler. The canine should respond to audible and/or visual signals.

**5) Indication:**

The canine must indicate to the handler that it has located the scent or subject.

**6) Search Skills:**

The canine must demonstrate the ability and stamina to search an assigned area effectively

**Building Search**

A building search will demonstrate the ability of the team to apply a search strategy to confined areas that have inaccessible subjects. The building search shall be conducted in the same manor as a rubble search without the hazards.

**Rubble Search**

The rubble search demonstrates the ability of the team to integrate all previously evaluated elements into an effective search tool, in a realistic, simulated disaster environment.

## **TEST METHODS**

The following testing procedures are designed to provide a representative evaluation of the expectations listed in Handler Knowledge and Performance and Canine Performance.

At no time during an evaluation is the handler permitted to move anything without permission of the evaluator.

### **Required Tests, In The Following Order:**

1. Handler Written Evaluation
2. Canine Behavior Evaluation
3. Canine Obedience Evaluation
4. Canine Agility Evaluation
5. Directional Control Evaluation
6. Building Evaluation
7. Rubble Evaluation

**If testing a currently operational Wilderness, Water Recovery or Cadaver team, behavior and obedience tests do not need to be repeated.**

## **Criteria for State Evaluators**

In order to evaluate canine teams to these Virginia First Responder Canine Team Standards, the evaluator must participate in a mandatory statewide evaluators' seminar and satisfy one of the two following criteria:

- a. Be a wilderness evaluator of a canine SAR group currently operating under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Emergency Management in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- b. Be an Operational First Responder Canine Team for a minimum of two years and be a member in good standing of a Canine SAR Group currently operating under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Emergency Management in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

## **EVALUATOR INFORMATION**

- a) The State SAR Coordinator upon request will issue written test materials to the evaluator(s). All test materials are confidential and security is the responsibility of the evaluator(s) to whom it is issued.
- b) All tests and evaluations will be scored on forms approved by the Virginia First Responder Canine Standards Committee and will be signed by the evaluator(s).
- c) The objectives of the behavior, obedience and agility evaluations are to help ensure that both the canine and the handler can work together as a team safely, efficiently and in conjunction with other teams and personnel.
- d) The objectives of the building and the rubble search field evaluations are to evaluate safety, planning ability search techniques and team stamina.
- e) The subjects should be placed in the search area far enough apart that the team should search a substantial portion of the area before all of the subjects are located.
- f) The goal is to locate the subject(s) and to evaluate safety, planning and technique.
- g) As subjects are located, they should remain in place until the exercise is completed.
- h) In the event of a validity challenge, it is the evaluator's responsibility to provide an operational first responder canine.
- i) At the discretion of the evaluators, the time may be extended due to the variability of test search sites, provided the team is actively working.
- j) Evaluations will be conducted on an individual team basis. Each team test will be observed by a minimum of two (2) evaluators, one of which is a state evaluator.
- k) Each evaluator will have a checklist for scoring each of the field teams. At the conclusion of each test, the evaluators will compare their scoring.
- l) Performance will be rated as either "Pass" or "Fail". Both evaluators must agree on the rating for the test to be valid.
- m) In the event there are conflicting ratings that the evaluators cannot resolve, the handler may be given a "NO TEST" rating and asked to repeat that test following procedures under "Retesting".
- n) If any one of the field tests is scored "Fail" by both evaluators, the procedures described under "Retesting" will apply.

**A. Retesting**

- a) If the score on any test is below the passing score, the handler may arrange for a retest. A retest may not be repeated on the same day as the original test.
- b) In the case of retesting a field evaluation because of a "Fail" rating, at least one of the evaluators that originally tested the team must participate in the retest.
- c) If, after receiving a failed rating on a retest, the candidate feels that he/she is being unfairly rated, he/she may request a retest with two different evaluators. The evaluators who rated the team "fail" may observe the retest, but will have no input on the evaluation results. This request for retest must be submitted by the candidate, in writing, to any of the group's officers.

**B. Method of Conducting State Recognized Evaluations**

Groups whose internal evaluation procedures meet or exceed these standards may use those procedures for certification testing provided the following conditions are met:

- a) The evaluations are observed and scored by at least one state authorized evaluator.
- b) The Canine First Responder Standards Committee approves the checklist/evaluation form used by that group.
- c) The approved checklist/evaluation form is completed and signed by both evaluators for each evaluation.

## **HANDLER WRITTEN TEST**

- a) The handler will complete a comprehensive written test and must achieve a score of at least 80%.
- b) The test of 50 multiple choice questions will be provided by VDEM and will be randomly selected from questions supplied by the Virginia First Responder Canine Team Committee.
- c) A state evaluator will administer the test, and copies of the results will be given to the group's Training Officer and the certifying handler.

## CANINE BEHAVIOR EVALUATION

For Evaluation Form see Appendix A

**Required Skills:** The canine must not display aggressive behavior

- a) The canine and handler shall load into a vehicle along with at least two other canine teams. The vehicle will then be driven for a distance of at least one mile during which time the canine must not display aggressive or uncontrolled behavior.
- b) The handler shall stand with the canine in the heel position. A stranger will approach the handler, shake hands and engage in conversation. The canine must not show aggressive behavior toward the stranger.
- c) The canine shall be tethered to a stationary object by a 6-foot lead. Another handler, with a canine at heel, will walk within 10 feet of the point where the canine is tied. The canine shall show no aggressive behavior.
- d) The canine search team shall complete a Figure "8" around two team handlers with their canines on lead, sitting at their sides positioned about eight feet apart. The testing team shall complete the pattern, on loose lead, passing within two feet of each of the post teams. The post teams will remain still and not interfere with the testing team.

## CANINE OBEDIENCE EVALUATION

For evaluation form see Appendix B

**Requirements:** The canine must respond appropriately to handler commands.

The canine must demonstrate the ability to walk with the handler in the heeling position, maintain a sit-stay or a down-stay when the handler is not present, stop while in motion and return to the handler when called.

- a) Heeling - The canine will heel on command through a straight walk, a right turn, a left turn, and a 180-degree turn. The canine will sit or stand in the heeling position when the handler stops. The canine can be off lead or on a loose lead.
- b) Out of sight stay - The canine may be placed next to the handler's pack and at least 10 feet away from any other person or canine. Upon direction from the evaluator, the handler shall give the canine the stay/wait command and the handler will move a minimum of 50 feet away. Time starts when the evaluator states "leave the canine". The canine may sit, stand or shift position, but shall not move more than a body length in any direction from where the canine was placed. Distractions will be present. After five (5) minutes, the evaluator will direct the handler to return to the canine. Handlers may signal the canine to stay, if needed, while returning. The exercise is complete when the handler has returned to his/her canine and the evaluator states, "exercise complete". No rewarding will be allowed until the exercise is complete.
- c) Stop on recall - The canine shall be placed on a stay/wait command a minimum of 40 feet from the handler and the evaluator. Upon direction from the evaluator, the handler shall call his/her canine. The handler will then stop the canine when directed by the evaluator. Once the stop command has been given, an immediate change in gait is required and the canine must then come to a stop within 20 feet. The canine may drop, sit, or stand. The handler may give multiple commands. The canine shall remain stationary until handler returns to canine or is recalled by the handler, at the direction of the evaluator.

## **CANINE AGILITY EVALUATION**

For evaluation form see Appendix C

**Requirements:** The canine must demonstrate the ability to negotiate obstacles and walk on elevated surfaces.

- a) Canine must complete five (5) of six (6) obstacles, including the four (4) mandatory obstacles.
- b) Canine will demonstrate stop and turn on any obstacle.
- c) Canine precedes handler.

**The following obstacles shall be included: ladder, elevated plank, unsteady/wobbly surface, and tunnel.**

- a) The team shall have five (5) minutes to complete the agility course.
- b) The handler will be directed to the clearly marked beginning of the course, where the handler shall remove the canine's collar and leash before starting. The course should be run in the sequence as numbered. However, if a canine refuses an obstacle, at the handler's discretion, the team may complete the course and re-attempt the obstacle in the remaining time. The canine should work as independently as possible following the handler's direction. Multiple commands are permitted.
- c) The canine should negotiate the obstacles confidently and carefully.
- d) The canine should negotiate the obstacles under handler control.
- e) Once the canine has started an obstacle, the handler should remain as stationary as possible.
- f) If the handler precedes the canine, the evaluator will instruct the handler to restart the canine on the obstacle. The handler may lift the canine off the obstacle or turn it around to restart.
- g) The handler may slow, stop or encourage the canine as needed, and may assist the canine, if needed, for safety reasons. Any physical assistance will require a restart of the obstacle.

**Obstacles (\* = mandatory completion)**

- a) \*A 6-foot-ladder (flat or round rungs) secured at a 45-degree angle.
- b) \*A plank elevated at least 5 feet off the ground (the 12” wide by 12’ long plank is to be stable).
- c) \*2-foot (approximate height) high unsteady, wobbly surface (warped boards, moving plank suspended on two barrels etc.).
- d) \*A dark, narrow tunnel/passageway containing at least one 90-degree turn. The canine should not be able to see through the tunnel to the end. Partial covering of the exit is permitted. Tunnel should be approximately 32 inches in diameter. Canine should fit into the tunnel without crawling.
- e) A seesaw (16’ long by 12” wide plank).
- f) A slick, slippery or unpleasant surface (i.e. chain link fence).

### **Course Construction**

- a) The course shall be constructed to include five obstacles out of the listed obstacles.
- b) The course may be set up as six separately constructed obstacles or as a combination. If two or more obstacles are combined, the canine must have the opportunity to pass each of the obstacles independently.
- c) Obstacles should be numbered clearly.

## **CANINE DIRECTIONAL CONTROL EVALUATION**

For Evaluation Form see Appendix D

**Requirement:** The canine must go up on each required platform at the direction of the handler.

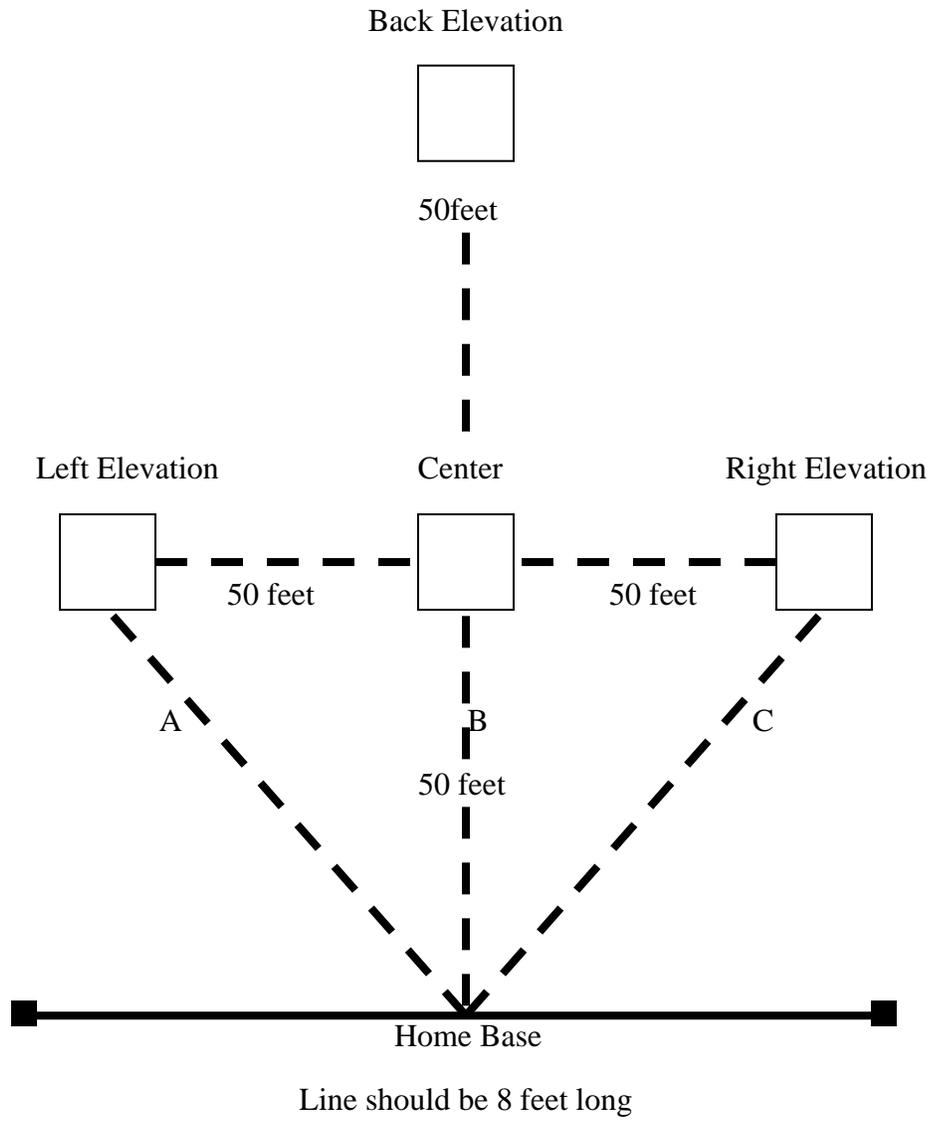
**Handler Information:**

The handler will remove the canine's leash before the exercise begins.

**Directability:**

- a) On the first go out, the canine must go up onto a specified elevation without getting onto any other elevation. The handler may stop the canine and redirect or recall the canine and restart as many times as time allows. If the canine goes up on the incorrect elevation first, the canine must be recalled and restarted. This applies to the first direction only.
- b) The team will have three (3) minutes to complete the course. The evaluators will designate the sequence of elevation the canine shall be sent to (right, left, center or back). The handler will direct the canine to a series of elevations. The canine must go up onto these elevations and stay there for five seconds. The canine may sit, stand or lie down. The handler may give multiple commands.
- c) The canine will be directed to five designated elevations and stay for five seconds on each elevation, ending the exercise with a recall to the handler. (See the canine directability diagram.) Diagonals will only be used to and from the starting position.
- d) The course will be laid out in a diamond shape. The area should be uncluttered, clear as possible (approximately 50 yards clear). The start shall be an 8' base line or starting line that is clearly marked: See diagram.
- e) The center elevation shall be 50 feet from the base of starting line. All the other elevations shall be 50 feet from the center elevation.
- f) The elevations should be clearly visible to the canine. Elevations should be approximately 36" X 36" in size, 6" to 24" high, and stable. The intention is to provide simple, stable, distraction-free targets to demonstrate directability skills.

Elevations are approximately 36"x36" in size  
and 6" to 24" high



— — — — Indicates possible course patterns

A, B, C indicate possible initial send-outs

## **BUILDING EVALUATION**

For Evaluation Form see Appendix E

### **Team Requirements:**

- a) Establishes scene safety.
- b) Canine responsive to handler direction and control.
- c) Canine searches independently.
- d) Canine shows commitment to each scent source.
- e) Handler informs evaluators of canine's alerts.
- f) Handler informs evaluators of location of each scent source.
- g) Canine indicates independently of handler.

### **Handler Information:**

- a) Handler establishes scene safety.
- b) Scene safety interview shall include the following:
  - 1) What time did the incident occur?
  - 2) What type of occupancy was the structure (school, office, apartment bldg., etc.)?
  - 3) What is the number of suspected missing persons?
  - 4) Has this structure been searched before?
  - 5) Has a structural engineer checked the building?
  - 6) What were the findings?
  - 7) Is it safe to enter?
  - 8) Are blueprints available?
  - 9) Has Hazmat checked the building?
  - 10) What were the findings?
  - 11) Have the utilities been secured? How and by whom?
    - i. Gas
    - ii. Electric
    - iii. Water
  - 12) Is Heavy Rescue available?
  - 13) Is Medical available?
  - 14) Is there a veterinarian available?
- c) There shall be five (5) minutes for the briefing/interviewing process.
- d) The handler will remove the canine's leash and removing the collar is recommended.

- e) The team shall be allowed 40 minutes to search the building for 2 subjects. The handler should inform the evaluators of the search strategy. The handler may not access the building until he/she is instructed to do so by the evaluators. An Evaluator will do the handler briefing. Evaluators will then proceed to predetermined areas to view the search before the team's 40 minute time starts. The handler shall direct the canine to search the area.
- f) The handler may direct the canine to search but shall not encourage the canine's indication.
- g) The handler will send the canine to search. The handler will notify the evaluators of canine's alerts. When the canine performs an indication, the handler shall notify the evaluators. The handler must proceed directly and safely to the area indicated by the canine. The handler will identify location of the scent source. The handler may reward the canine.

**Building Site:**

- a) The building should be approximately 3000-4000 square feet.
- b) There should be new, unused subject locations created for the evaluation. They should be created in inaccessible areas that are out of the handler's sight. The evaluators must have a clear view of the canine's work.
- c) Banner or marking tape may be used to indicate areas that are deemed inaccessible for the evaluation.

**Subject Placement**

- a) The subjects shall be well concealed from both handler and canine.
- b) The hiding areas shall be carefully constructed to prevent small/large canines from accessing the victims.
- c) All subjects will have a radio with an earpiece (if available) and shall be monitored periodically.
- d) The subjects must be in place at least 20 minutes before the canine is sent.

## **RUBBLE EVALUATION**

For Evaluation Form see Appendix F

### **Team Requirements:**

- a) Establishes scene safety.
- b) Canine responsive to handler direction and control.
- c) Canine searches independently.
- d) Canine shows commitment to each scent source.
- e) Handler informs evaluators of canine's alerts.
- f) Handler informs evaluators of location of each scent source.
- g) Canine indicates independently of handler.

### **Handler Information:**

- a) Handler establishes scene safety.
- b) Scene safety interview shall include the following:
  1. What time did the structure collapse?
  2. What type of occupancy was the structure (school, office, apartment bldg., etc.)?
  3. What is the number of suspected missing persons?
  4. Has this structure been searched before?
  5. Has a structural engineer checked the building?
  6. What were the findings?
  7. Is it safe to enter?
  8. Are blueprints available?
  9. Has Hazmat checked the building?
  10. What were the findings?
  11. Have the utilities been secured? How and by whom?
    - i. Gas
    - ii. Electric
    - iii. Water
  12. Is Heavy Rescue available?
  13. Is Medical available?
  14. Is there a veterinarian available?
- c) There shall be five (5) minutes for the briefing/interviewing process.
- d) The handler will remove the canine's leash and removing the collar is recommended.

- e) The team shall be allowed 30 minutes to search the rubble for two subjects. The handler should inform the evaluators of the search strategy. Evaluators may or may not be positioned on the site while the canine is searching. The handler may not access the rubble site in any areas identified as inaccessible. An Evaluator will do the handler briefing. Evaluators will then proceed to predetermined areas to view the rubblework before the team's 30-minute time starts. The handler shall direct the canine to search the area.
- f) The handler may direct the canine to search but shall not encourage the canine's indication.
- g) The handler will send the canine to search. The handler will notify the evaluators of canine's alerts. When the canine performs an indication, the handler shall notify the evaluators. The handler must proceed directly and safely to the area indicated by the canine. The handler will identify location of the scent source. The handler may reward the canine with a toy on the rubble; however, no food rewards should be given on the rubble pile.

**Course Construction:**

- a) Subject locations should be in inaccessible areas that are out of the handler's sight. The evaluators must have a clear view of the canine's work.
- b) The rubble site shall have a minimum average height of 5 feet and consist of an area of 2500 to 3500 square feet. It should consist of a mixture of materials common to disaster sites. Banner tape is to be used to reduce the search area when larger rubble sites are being used.

**Subject Placement**

- a) The subjects shall be well concealed from both handler and canine.
- b) The hiding areas shall be carefully constructed to prevent small/large canines from accessing the victims.
- c) Rubble sites will have multiple subject locations.
- d) All victims will have a radio with an earpiece (if available) and shall be monitored on a constant basis.
- e) The subjects must be in place at least 30 minutes before the canine is sent.

## **RECERTIFICATION PROCEDURE**

- a) Each team must recertify every 2 years.
- b) The team must be considered an active member in good standing within his/her organization/group.
- c) Take, and successfully complete, the Recertification Field Evaluation within six months before or after the anniversary date. (See APPENDIX I for evaluation criteria).
- d) An officer of the group, and the evaluators must complete the Application for Recertification, APPENDIX J and submit it to Virginia Department of Emergency Management within four months of the team passing his/her recertification.
- e) Upon receipt of the form requesting recertification, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management will renew the team's certification for two additional years at which time "conditions of certification" described in Certification Procedures will apply.

### **Failure to Recertify**

If a team fails to recertify within six (6) months of the expiration date, the certification is dropped and the candidate will be required to complete the entire application and testing process for certification again.

FTM recertification will not be required for operational handlers.

### **Recertification Field Evaluation for First Responder**

#### **Purpose:**

The objective of the First Responder Recertification Evaluation is to assess the ability of the team to continue to search for human scent.

#### **Method:**

**Recertification follows method outlined under original certification for rubble evaluation**

## APPENDIX A

### First Responder Behavior Evaluation Form

Canine Handler \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Location \_\_\_\_\_ Canine \_\_\_\_\_  
 Evaluators \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

1) The canine and handler are loaded into the back of a vehicle with at least two other canine teams. The vehicle was driven for a distance of \_\_\_\_\_ mile(s). (Must be at least one mile.)

Pass    Fail

2) Handler stands with the canine in the heeling position. A stranger approaches and engages the handler in conversation.

Pass    Fail

3) Canine is secured to a stationary object by a 6-foot lead. The handler moves out of sight of the canine. Another handler, with his/her canine at heel will walk past the canine being tested. This handler and canine will be 10 feet from the point where the canine being tested is tethered.

Pass    Fail

4.) The team will complete a Figure "8" around two team handlers with their canines on lead, sitting at their sides positioned about eight feet apart. The testing team shall complete the pattern, on loose lead, passing within three feet of each of the post teams. The post teams will remain still and not interfere with the testing team.

Pass    Fail

**\*All skills must be passed\***

Evaluator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\* Requirement satisfied via operational Wilderness, Water Recovery, Trailing,  
 or Cadaver status (Date) \_\_\_\_\_**

## APPENDIX B

### First Responder Obedience Evaluation Form

Canine Handler \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Location \_\_\_\_\_ Canine \_\_\_\_\_  
 Evaluators \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

**1) Heel:**

The canine heeled on command on a loose lead or off-lead.

- a) Walk straight line
- b) Right turn
- c) Left turn
- d) 180 degree turn
- e) Stop/Halt

Pass    Fail

**2) Stay:**

The canine remained in place without correction for a minimum of five minutes with the handler at least 50 feet away. The canine may sit, stand or shift position, but shall not move more than a body length in any direction from where the canine was placed. Distractions will be present.

Pass    Fail

**3) Stop in Motion:**

While the canine was in motion, it was given a stop/halt command.

Canine responded appropriately to command.

Pass    Fail

Remained in position until released.

Pass    Fail

**\*All skills must be passed\***

Evaluator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\* Requirement satisfied via operational Wilderness, Water Recovery or  
 Cadaver status (Date) \_\_\_\_\_**

## APPENDIX C

### First Responder Agility Evaluation Form

**Canine Handler** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Date)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location** \_\_\_\_\_ **Canine** \_\_\_\_\_

**Evaluators** \_\_\_\_\_ **and** \_\_\_\_\_

**\* Starred items denote skills, which must receive a passing score**

- a) \*A 6-foot ladder (flat or round rungs) secured at a 45-degree angle. Pass    Fail
- b) \*A 12 inches wide by 12-feet long plank elevated at least 5 feet off the ground. Pass    Fail
- c) \*Unsteady, wobbly surface (warped boards, etc). Pass    Fail
- d) \*A dark, narrow tunnel/passageway (approximately 32 inches in diameter) containing at least one right angle turn. The canine should fit into the tunnel without crawling. Pass    Fail
- e) A seesaw. Pass    Fail
- f) A slick, slippery/unpleasant surface. Pass    Fail
- g) A moving plank suspended on two barrels (12 feet long by 12 inches wide). Pass    Fail

Overall Score: Pass \_\_\_\_\_ Fail \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX D**

**First Responder Directional Evaluation Form**

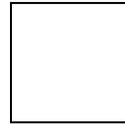
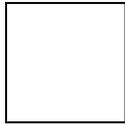
**Canine Handler** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Date)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location** \_\_\_\_\_ **Canine** \_\_\_\_\_

**Evaluators** \_\_\_\_\_ **and** \_\_\_\_\_

The canine was directed to four designated elevations and stayed for five seconds on each elevation, ending the exercise with a recall to the handler. Pass    Fail

Indicate below where canine was sent and number each block accordingly.



**Start line**

Overall Score: Pass \_\_\_\_\_ Fail \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E

### First Responder Building Evaluation Form

**Canine Handler** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Date)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location** \_\_\_\_\_

**Evaluators** \_\_\_\_\_ **and** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time Started** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time Completed** \_\_\_\_\_

**\* Starred items denote skills, which must receive a passing score**

#### **Handler Skills**

- |  |      |      |
|--|------|------|
| 1. Handler adequately attired and equipped for condition.                                | Pass | Fail |
| 2. Handler conducted a scene safety interview or briefing.                               | Pass | Fail |
| 3. Handler developed an appropriate strategy based on information acquired in interview. | Pass | Fail |
| 4. Handler followed strategy.  | Pass | Fail |
| 5. *Handler articulated canine's alert.  | Pass | Fail |
| 6. Handler informed evaluators each time he/she saw canine alert.                        | Pass | Fail |
| 7. Handler covered area adequately.  | Pass | Fail |
| 8. Handler is in tune with canine's needs.   | Pass | Fail |
| 9. Handler is comfortable searching in buildings.  | Pass | Fail |

#### **Canine Skills**

- |  |      |      |
|--|------|------|
| 1. Canine stayed focused on search.                              | Pass | Fail |
| 2. Canine was easily refocused after being distracted.           | Pass | Fail |
| 3. Canine was willing to leave the handler to follow up a scent. | Pass | Fail |
| 4. Canine searched effectively.                                  | Pass | Fail |
| 5. Canine made a self-directed find on subject 1.                | Pass | Fail |
| 6. *Canine indicated to the handler it had found subject 1.      | Pass | Fail |
| 7. *Canine directed handler to subject 1.                        | Pass | Fail |
| 8. Canine made a self-directed find on subject 2.                | Pass | Fail |
| 9. *Canine indicated to the handler it had found subject 2.      | Pass | Fail |
| 10. *Canine directed handler to subject 2.                       | Pass | Fail |

Overall Score: Passed \_\_\_\_\_ Failed \_\_\_\_\_

**Building Evaluation Form Back Page**

Comments from Evaluators

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Comments from Handler

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Comments from Subjects

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Evaluator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX F

### First Responder Rubble Evaluation Form

Canine Handler \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Location \_\_\_\_\_  
 Evaluators \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
 Time Started \_\_\_\_\_ Time Completed \_\_\_\_\_

\* Starred items denote skills which must receive a passing score

#### Handler Skills

- |  |      |      |
|--|------|------|
| 1) Handler adequately attired and equipped for condition.                                | Pass | Fail |
| 2) Handler conducted a scene safety interview or briefing.                               | Pass | Fail |
| 3) Handler developed an appropriate strategy based on information acquired in interview. | Pass | Fail |
| 4) Handler followed strategy.  | Pass | Fail |
| 5) *Handler articulated canine's alert.  | Pass | Fail |
| 6) Handler informed evaluators each time he/she saw canine alert.                        | Pass | Fail |
| 7) Handler covered area adequately.  | Pass | Fail |
| 8) Handler is in tune with canine's needs.   | Pass | Fail |
| 9) Handler is comfortable searching on or around rubble.                                 | Pass | Fail |

#### Canine Skills

- |  |      |      |
|--|------|------|
| 1) Canine is comfortable searching on or around rubble.          | Pass | Fail |
| 2) Canine stayed focused on search.                              | Pass | Fail |
| 3) Canine was easily refocused after being distracted.           | Pass | Fail |
| 4) Canine was willing to leave the handler to follow up a scent. | Pass | Fail |
| 5) Canine searched effectively.                                  | Pass | Fail |
| 6) Canine made a self-directed find on subject 1.                | Pass | Fail |
| 7) *Canine indicated to the handler it had found subject 1.      | Pass | Fail |
| 8) *Canine directed handler to subject 1.                        | Pass | Fail |
| 9) Canine made a self-directed find on subject 2.                | Pass | Fail |
| 10) *Canine indicated to the handler it had found subject 2.     | Pass | Fail |
| 11) *Canine directed handler to subject 2.                       | Pass | Fail |

Overall Score: Pass \_\_\_\_\_ Fail \_\_\_\_\_

**Rubble Evaluation Form Back Page**

Comments from Evaluators

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Comments from Handler

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Comments from Subjects

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Evaluator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX G**

### **CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES**

The applicant must have satisfactorily completed all of the written and practical evaluations described in TEST METHODS.

#### **Team Certification Application Instructions**

- a) The applicant, a state evaluator, and a group officer must sign the application for certification found in Appendix H and submit to the office of the State SAR Coordinator.
- b) Upon receipt of the above documentation of requirements, the State SAR Coordinator will send confirmation of certification to the individual canine handler.
- c) Upon completion of all the requirements outlined in this document, the authorized team is eligible to respond as a Virginia First Responder Canine Team, on a State Mission with a valid mission number designation, as a representative of the group holding the MOU.

#### **Conditions of Certification**

- a) Provided that all requirements are met, the team will be issued a certification by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management as a " Virginia First Responder Canine Team"
- b) This certification does not constitute a license to practice the skills tested, but signifies only that the team holding the certificate has met an established basic standard of knowledge and performance and has demonstrated competency.
- c) The certification will be for the handler and canine (team) that completed the testing together. If the handler wishes to certify as a team with another canine, the entire testing procedure, with the exception of the written test, must be repeated with the new dog.
- d) The certification will be valid as long as the organizations "Memorandum Of Understanding" with the state is in good standing, and as long as the team is in good standing and meets the requirement of the parent organization.
- e) The parent group must promptly notify the Virginia Department of Emergency Management of a change of status of any operational team member.

**APPENDIX H**

**APPLICATION for CERTIFICATION**

**First Responder Canine Team**

**Handler's Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Canine's Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Group Affiliation** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Date)** \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Test	Date Passed	Evaluator(s) Present
<b>Written</b>		
<b>Behavior</b>		
<b>Obedience</b>		
<b>Agility</b>		
<b>Direction</b>		
<b>Field Skills:</b>		
<b>Building</b>		
<b>Rubble</b>		

Handler has completed the following (insert dates): First Aid \_\_\_\_\_

Ropes I \_\_\_\_\_ Hazmat Awareness \_\_\_\_\_ FTM or equivalent \_\_\_\_\_

Confined Space Awareness \_\_\_\_\_ Structural Collapse Awareness \_\_\_\_\_

Does canine have all immunizations required by his/her group current? \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

Group Officer Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

The team listed above qualifies as a Virginia First Responder Canine Team under these standards in knowledge and ability. Therefore, we recommend that the team be allowed to participate on searches as a state resource in the capacity of a "Virginia First Responder Canine Team".

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX I

### Recertification Evaluation Form

#### Rubble Search

\* Starred items denote skills which must receive a passing score

#### **Handler Skills**

- |  |      |      |
|--|------|------|
| 1) Handler adequately attired and equipped for condition.                                | Pass | Fail |
| 2) Handler conducted a scene safety interview or briefing.                               | Pass | Fail |
| 3) Handler developed an appropriate strategy based on information acquired in interview. | Pass | Fail |
| 4) Handler followed strategy.  | Pass | Fail |
| 5) *Handler articulated canine's alert.  | Pass | Fail |
| 6) Handler informed evaluators each time he/she saw canine alert.                        | Pass | Fail |
| 7) Handler covered area adequately.  | Pass | Fail |
| 8) Handler is in tune with canine's needs.   | Pass | Fail |
| 9) Handler is comfortable searching in buildings.  | Pass | Fail |

#### **Canine Skills**

- |  |      |      |
|--|------|------|
| 1) Canine is comfortable searching on or around rubble.          | Pass | Fail |
| 2) Canine stayed focused on search.                              | Pass | Fail |
| 3) Canine was easily refocused after being distracted.           | Pass | Fail |
| 4) Canine was willing to leave the handler to follow up a scent. | Pass | Fail |
| 5) Canine searched effectively.                                  | Pass | Fail |
| 6) Canine made a self-directed find on subject 1.                | Pass | Fail |
| 7) *Canine indicated to the handler it had found subject 1.      | Pass | Fail |
| 8) *Canine directed handler to subject 1.                        | Pass | Fail |
| 9) Canine made a self-directed find on subject 2.                | Pass | Fail |
| 10) *Canine indicated to the handler it had found subject 2.     | Pass | Fail |
| 11) *Canine directed handler to subject 2.                       | Pass | Fail |

Overall Score: Passed \_\_\_\_\_ Failed \_\_\_\_\_

**Recertification Evaluation Form Back Page**

Comments from Evaluators

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Comments from Handler

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Comments from Subjects

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Evaluator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX J**

**APPLICATION for RECERTIFICATION  
First Responder Canine Team**

**Handler Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Dog Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Group Affiliation** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Date)** \_\_\_\_\_

The team above successfully completed the recertification evaluation on (Date) \_\_\_\_\_ . The state evaluators were \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

The handler has the following first aid certification: \_\_\_\_\_

Does canine have all immunizations required by his/her group current \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

Group Officer Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

The team listed above qualifies as a Virginia First Responder Canine Team under these standards in knowledge and ability. Therefore, we recommend that the team be recertified as a state resource in the capacity of a “Virginia First Responder Canine Team”.

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX K

### PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

**In addition to the equipment required by supporting standards, referenced herein, the following items listed are required in a disaster environment:**

- a) Steel toed boots
- b) Helmet
- c) Leather gloves
- d) Eye protection

**Additional list of clothing and equipment is provided below.**

- a) Water
- b) Compass
- c) Flashlight - with extra batteries.
- d) Trash bags
- e) First aid kit
- f) Fire starter
- g) Sealable plastic bags
- h) Whistle
- i) Nylon cord or equivalent
- j) Knife
- k) Food - At least a day's supply for handler and canine.
- l) Paper and pencil
- m) Surgical gloves
- n) GPS
- o) Wind shell jacket with hood
- p) Water resistant jacket or parka with hood. - A Gore-Tex or similar jacket can serve for both items 1 and 2
- q) Rain pants or rain chaps - add gaiters for winter
- r) Heavy \*wool shirts or sweaters as required
- s) Long underwear of \*wool, silk, polypro or other suitable synthetic material - cotton thermal underwear is not acceptable
- t) Leather gloves with \*wool liners - mittens suggested for extremely cold weather
- u) Backpacking or mountaineering boots appropriate to the terrain and conditions
- v) Storm shelter: Tube tent, space blanket, lightweight tarp
- w) Sleeping bag or similar sleeping pad, and a suitable shelter
- x) Disposable camera

\*Wool or a comparable fabric that retains insulating properties when wet. Down is not acceptable.

## **APPENDIX L**

### **REFERANCE MATERIAL**

Carter, David. *Field Team Member Student Manual*. Rutherglen, Virginia. Search and Rescue Training Associates, Inc. 1989.

FEMA. *Overview of the Canine Olfactory System*. National Urban Search and Rescue Response System: Canine Specialist Training. October 2004.

Bulanda, Susan. *Ready! The Training of the Search and Rescue Dog*. Portland, Oregon. Doral Publishing. 1994.

Bobbie Mammato, *Pet First Aid*, American Red Cross, Staywell Publishing. 1997

## **APPENDIX M**

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Group Recognition: Upon implementation of these standards, the groups initially recognized as being state authorized organizations qualified to field state authorized dog handlers are:

- a) Blue & Gray Search and Rescue Dogs, Inc.
- b) Dogs-East, Inc.
- c) Greater Atlantic Rescue Dogs, Inc.
- d) K-9 Alert Search and Rescue Dogs, Inc.
- e) Mid-Atlantic D.O.G.S., Inc.
- f) Virginia Search and Rescue Dog Association, Inc.

#### **Team Recognition:**

Upon implementation of these standards, for each of the identified organizations above, each individual canine team that has met their group's requirement for operational status will be recognized as a “Virginia First Responder Canine Team”. From the effective date of these standards, each of the teams will recertify as required by these standards and their organizations.

In order for groups to be considered as Agents of the Commonwealth, all persons within a group working in this discipline, must at the very least, adhere to these minimum standards and are encouraged to go above and beyond this level of training.

**The Virginia Department of Emergency Management Operations Division  
will publish and maintain these standards**