

Fire Investigation Search Dog & Handler Team National Training Standard Proposal

Introduction

- 1.1 For any search dog team (of any discipline) to meet all of its operational tasks and objectives it is essential that all candidates are initially trained to a common standard of proficiency by any training provider who undertakes the initial training role.
- 1.2 Likewise a National Training Standard must by necessity take into account routine, continuation, and refresher training for the ongoing development of both dog and handler during its operational career. This training will also form the foundation for the Search Dog Teams level of operational proficiency at annual testing or certification.
- 1.3 The National Training Standard will also recommend a standard bibliography which all candidate handlers and current handlers will study and gain a theoretical knowledge of training and care for the animals in their charge. In this instance the agreed bibliography will be those sections of the '**Training and Care Manual for Dogs**' published by ACPO Sub Committee for Police Dogs released to the United Kingdoms **Association of Fire Investigation Dog Handlers** by Deputy Assistant Commissioner Barbara Wilding, Chair of that Committee in 2003.
- 1.4 The objectives of this document will be to state those areas which will be included as part of all future initial training for these teams to operate within UK and give confidence to those partners, Police, Crime Scene Examiners and Forensic Scientists that the Search Dog Teams working within the environs of the crime scene are trained to a degree that is at a level operational efficiency of search dog teams from within their own Police Service areas.
- 1.5 Finally this document will not only concentrate on the practical aspect of dog handling but will also include those areas that the operational dog handler must study to fulfil the responsibilities required of him or her. Areas such as cross contamination, statement writing, operational preparedness of dog and handler, and any implications placed on the team through **current and future changes to PACE**, and recording of the teams actions within the crime scene which may fall into the remit of the CPS with particular attention being paid to section **3.2.1 of the CPS Disclosure: Experts evidence and unused material, Guidance Booklet for Experts. Rest assured the Fire Investigation Search Dog handler will be considered an expert witness at some time in the future.**

Course Content

2.1 The initial training course for Fire Investigation Search Dogs and Handlers should be prepared to cover 3 phases. The first should be preparing the candidate for the course and future career of an operational search dog handler by providing the individual with a number of publications for 'Pre Course Reading'. They should be as a minimum the following documents;

- The ACPO Training and Care Manual (Agreed Sections)
- A Digest of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (2005 Amended)
- CPS/ACPO Booklet, Disclosure: Experts evidence and unused material, Guidance Booklet for Experts.
- And any other material/book recommended by the training provider but will not form part on any present or future assessment.

2.2 The practical aspect of the initial training course will provide the candidate handler with a thorough understanding and ability to work and handle the search dog in all perceived areas of operation.

For example;

- Vehicle cleanliness
- Equipment maintenance and cleansing
- Kennel Husbandry
- Animal welfare and cleanliness (Daily)
- Preparing the dog for work
- Obedience & Control of Dog
- Room search
- Building search
- Fire scenes residential
- Fire scenes industrial
- Fire scenes commercial
- Open areas
- Clothing search (Evidence gathering under supervision of a Police Officer and applicable warrant)
- Person search (Evidence gathering under supervision of a Police Officer and applicable warrant)
- Line and Leash Working, all exercises)
- Scent discrimination
- Aide Memoir note taking
- Aide Memoir Photography
- Negating cross contamination
- Systematic searching of all scenes
- Witness Statement preparation (Within home Fire Service legal guidelines)
- Post deployment decontamination
- Health, Safety and Welfare of both Dog and Handler
- Dynamic Risk assessment of search scenes
- Inter Agency Liaison

- Record Keeping

2.3 The training course should culminate in the Candidate dog and handler undertaking the current Assessment and Certification process and if successful be Certified as being 'Fit for Purpose' before returning to the candidates home Fire Service. Should the Candidate Handler and Dog not reach a standard of operational 'Fit for Purpose' the Examining Officers should provide a training 'Action Plan' for the Candidate Handler and training provider and be re-assessed within 30 days of the initial Certification in the area/s of requirement of the action plan. In any case the Candidate Dog and Handler Team **should not be deemed as an operational search dog team until all aspects of the Assessment and Certification process are completed to an appropriate level of operational efficiency as prescribed in the annual assessment and certification process.**

2.4 No Training provider shall act as an Examiner in the Annual Assessment and Certification process of any Dog and Handler team he or she has trained either in the initial or subsequent assessments. This is to provide the end user, whether it is during a Fire Service Fire Investigation or the Police Service Criminal Investigation with a 'Quality Assurance' and evidential audit trail that the team being used is beyond approach and criticism should the results of the Search Dog Teams search be brought into question in a Court of Law.

Continuation and Refresher Training

3.1 It is essential that all search dog and handler teams attend regular, structured training events between each and every Annual Assessment and Certification. As these Search Dog Teams work in the area of Criminal investigation and the Handler may be considered by the investigating Police Officer and prosecuting Barrister as an 'Expert' it is therefore imperative that these Teams attend the same minimum standard of continuation, refresher and structured training as is required of a Police Dog Handler. The failure to meet this standard will probably bring into question any evidence found by the Fire Investigation Search Dog Team in a Court of Law at a later stage in the investigation. Therefore it is recommended that all Fire Service, Fire Investigation Search Dog Teams undertake the following training annually;

- 10 single days per annum of structured training under a suitable qualified Trainer.
- 5 Days refresher training under a suitable qualified Trainer at a training venue
- 5 Days continuation training under a suitable qualified Trainer at a training venue
- Impromptu training by the Handler as required and if operational commitments allow

- **All training will be recorded along with any recommended action plans in records maintained by both the Handler and Trainer and will form part of the Handlers records for inspection at the annual Assessment and Certification Process.**

Training Objectives.

- 4.1 Each of the training subjects listed below should be achieved and consolidated before each Candidate Handler and Search dog is put forward for annual assessment and certification.

The objective of each of these individual subjects is to prepare the candidate Handler and Dog for operational deployment with a United Kingdom Fire Service and in close liaison with investigating police officers, crime scene examiners and forensic scientists.

They will also prepare the Handler and dog to develop their skills base in the future and as such should be seen a core level to be improved upon and developed with time.

- Vehicle cleanliness
- Equipment maintenance and cleansing
- Kennel Husbandry
- Animal welfare and cleanliness (Daily)
- Preparing the dog for work
- Obedience & Control of Dog
- Room search
- Building search
- Fire scenes residential
- Fire scenes industrial
- Fire scenes commercial
- Open areas
- Clothing search (Evidence gathering under supervision of a Police Office and applicable warrant)
- Person search (Evidence gathering under supervision of a Police Officer and applicable warrant)
- Line and Leash Working, all exercises)
- Scent discrimination
- Food or distraction tolerant
- Aide Memoir note taking
- Aide Memoir Photography
- Negating cross contamination
- Systematic searching of all scenes
- Witness Statement preparation (Within home Fire Service legal guidelines)
- Post deployment decontamination
- Health, Safety and Welfare of both Dog and Handler
- Dynamic Risk assessment of search scenes

- Inter Agency Liaison
- Record Keeping

Dog Training Objectives

4.2.1 Vehicles Cleanliness objective

The purpose of this objective is to teach the candidate handler that they should be aware of the importance of keeping his / her vehicles interior and cages clean and free from any contamination of the dogs target substances. Likewise the handler should be aware of the importance of cleanliness in the vehicles interior and cages with regard to the implications for the dog's health and welfare.

4.2.2 Equipment maintenance and cleansing objective

The purpose of this objective is to teach the candidate handler that it is essential that each candidate handler should be aware of his or her responsibilities in keeping the dog's allocated equipment in a clean condition, ready for operational deployment. It is considered 'good practice' to keep equipment in numbered, sealed bags, ready for use along with an 'audit trail' of that equipment since its last use and cleaning so that this can be included in the handlers witness statement should it be required.

4.2.3 Kennel Husbandry objective

The purpose of this objective is to teach the candidate handler the correct way to clean his / her dogs living quarters with particular attention being drawn to the correct quantities of disinfectant required in the scrub down routine to protect the animal from coming into contact with hazardous amounts of cleaning chemical.

4.2.4 Animal welfare and cleanliness objective

The purpose of this objective is to teach the candidate handler the correct way to inspect, groom and examine his / her dog as part of a daily routine at the start of each day. Also the importance that this examination may give an early indication of abnormalities which may have an effect on the dog's health and well being.

4.2.5 Preparing the dog for work objective

The purpose of this objective is to teach the candidate handler the correct way to prepare the dog for work with attention being paid to harnessing and the wearing of protective 'boots' to protect the animals paws from injury from fire debris.

4.2.6 Obedience and control of the dog objective

The purpose of this objective is to teach the candidate handler to control the dog and basic dog obedience, both in the operational search phase and in normal conditions. The dog should be proficient in response to commands of;

- Walking at heel
- Sit

- Down
- Stay
- Working to the left and right
- Distance down
- Recall
- Away or Get on
- Find or Seek
- Leave

The list of above commands is not exhaustive but should be seen as a basic list for the Handler to have control of his / her dog.

4.2.7 Room search objective

The purpose of this objective is teaching the candidate handler to search with dog and detect the presence of the dogs target substances. All the search exercises are to be taught with, realistic hides of substances which are realistic in nature, amount and achievable by the dog.

The dog will be capable of searching a single room on command of the handler either a 'clean' room or a fire scene and accurately indicate the presence of any of its target substances. **The indication given by the dog shall be whatever is the individual dogs 'passive alert indication' in all the following search exercises.**

Note a pro-active indication such as a dig is to be avoided at all costs in training and is not an acceptable indication by the dog of indicating the presence of target substances.

4.2.8 Building search objective

The dog will be capable of searching multiple rooms or a building on command of the handler and accurately indicate the presence of any of its target substances.

4.2.9 Fire scenes search (Residential/Industrial/Commercial) objective

Wherever possible during the initial training phase the dog and handler should be trained in a real fire scene environment to condition the dog in working in a hostile environment. Likewise this environment is essential to teach the handler the benefits of risk assessment, systematic search and 'reading' his dog for signs of olfactory fatigue and resting the dog appropriately.

4.2.10 Open area search objective

This objective is to teach the candidate handler an outside area search. The dog will be capable of searching open areas such as gardens etc and indicating the presence of its target substances in or on containers, clothing (i.e. gloves etc) or other items which may be associated with a fire crime scene. By subjecting the dog to this environment early in its

training will indicate the dog's propensity to 'game' whilst searching which can be remedied with training or rejected if the gaming drive is too strong.

4.2.11 Clothing search objective

The purpose of this objective is to simulate a suspects clothing search, under supervision of a police officer. The clothing search exercise should be carried out in a clean room by placing 5 pieces of similar clothing on the floor approximately 1 metre apart. 1 piece of clothing is contaminated with target substance. The dog will on command from the handler search all items of clothing and indicate on the item of clothing contaminated. The purpose of this exercise is to simulate a suspects clothing search being conducted under the supervision of a Police Officer and search warrant if applicable.

4.2.12 Person search objective

The purpose of this exercise is to simulate searching a line of persons to determine if anybody in the line is contaminated with target substance. The person search exercise should be carried out in a target substance free environment. Several persons should be stood in a line and 1 person who has been contaminated with target substance should be stood in the line. The dog, on command will search all persons in the line and indicate the presence of its target substance on the person contaminated. The purpose of this exercise is to simulate a suspects clothing search being conducted under the supervision of a Police Officer and search warrant if applicable.

4.2.13 Line & leash working objective

The purpose of this objective is to work the dog both on and off the leash or line. The dog should be worked during the whole of the initial training phase both on and off the line or leash. The purpose of working the dog in the manner is to familiarise the dog with the line or leash whilst working as in some search scenes it will be a necessity to work the dog in this way as a safety precaution, i.e. near a busy roadway, or where the structural integrity of the building cannot be quantified by a dynamic risk assessment.

4.2.14 Scent discrimination objective

The purpose of this objective is to ensure that the search dog can discriminate between ignitable liquids and naturally occurring by products of fire. Scent discrimination is an essential requirement for the dog to be taught during the initial training phase as it teaches the dog to 'recognise' the difference between introduced target substances (ignitable liquids or solids which are hydrocarbon based) and naturally occurring hydrocarbon based substances which are released or developed from manmade materials affected by and during a fire.

This exercise is carried out by placing several burn pots containing a similar mix of manmade and natural fibre items and ignited. One of these burn pots will contain an introduced target substance. The pots will be left to cool and the dog will on command of the handler search **all** of the burn pots and give a positive indication of its target substance on the burn pot which was contaminated.

4.2.15 Food and distraction tolerant objective

The purpose of this objective is teaching the dog that it should ignore food and other distractions found in the search area. The dog will be trained through the whole of the initial training phase to be food and distraction tolerant which should result in the dog ignoring the presence of food and reasonable distractions in the search area both in training and during operational deployment.

Handler Training Objectives

5.1 Aide Memoir note taking objective

The purpose of this objective is to prepare the Handler candidate for the requirements placed upon him or her by United Kingdom legislation such as PACE and other Acts of Parliament which demand that all persons entering the potential crime scene are properly accountable in a Court of Law when called upon to give or disclose evidence in a criminal or civil case. It cannot be stressed to highly that this requirement be practised on each and every operational deployment to protect the Handler, the search dogs ability to search and find target substance and to ensure the integrity of any physical evidence found.

5.1.1 Aide Memoir photography objective

The purpose of this objective is similar to the former with particular attention being paid to the accurate recording of photographic captions related to each individual photograph. Along with details of **why** the photograph was required, **where** the photograph was taken and **when** the image was recorded. It is also teach the candidate handler the correct and acceptable way to save digital images on disc so that the integrity of the image cannot be questioned in Court.

5.1.2 Negating Cross Contamination objective

The purpose of this objective is to prepare the candidate Handler with the core level skill to ensure that any opportunity from cross contamination of crime scenes is negated and the integrity of the Teams search cannot be bought into question in a Court of Law. Subjects such as the decontamination of Personal Protective Equipment and clothing of both the Handler and dog, storage of operational equipment, surveying the RVP and entry route prior to deployment to ensure that no traces of target substances are introduced to the crime scene from other sources such as Fire Service equipment (Generators, Forced air fans etc).

5.1.3 Systematic searching objective

The purpose of this objective is to teach the candidate handler and dog a systematic search methodology whether it is a single room search, building search or the larger fire scene which may take several hours or even days to complete.

Once the core skills of systematic searching are taught, understood and implemented by the candidate handler no future search can ever be considered as incomplete or with areas that have been 'missed' by the dog.

5.1.4 Witness statement preparation

The purpose of this objective is to prepare the candidate handler with the core skills to complete an accurate and true record of events in the form of a Police Witness statement. The final layout and content of this may vary from Fire Service to Fire service as each has its own legal advisors but it is possible to cover the basic requirements for the completion of a witness statement which records the 'facts' of the witness's actions, omitting 'hearsay' and recording any information which is pertinent to the incident. Suffice is to say that this core skill should be seen as guidelines until the candidate handler has had the opportunity to discuss the format of his or her witness statement the individual Fire Service Legal advisers.

5.1.5 Post deployment decontamination objective

The purpose of this objective is to teach the candidate handler the necessity and requirement of post deployment decontamination of the dog, the handler, equipment used and the handler's vehicle.

5.1.6 Health & Safety and welfare of Dog and Handler objective

The purpose of this objective is to give the candidate handler an insight into the Health & Safety issues of operational dog handling along with some of the welfare issues surrounding the handlers responsibility to not only him/her self but also to the animal in their charge. The dog handler is seen by the public to be a 'professional' and as such should conduct him/her self in a professional manner at all times.

5.1.7 Dynamic Risk Assessment objective

The purpose of this objective is to prepare the candidate handler for operational deployment ensuring that it is his/her prime consideration that he/her will not put the dog or him/her self or any other person at risk during the deployment. Dog and Handler safety is solely on the handlers shoulders and is his /her responsibility alone. It is better to not to deploy than take an unacceptable risk and cause injury to the dog or themselves.

6.1 Summary

- 6.1.2** It is recommended that by following the objectives of this National Training Standard all future Fire Investigation Search Dog and Handler teams will, for the first time in the United Kingdom, be trained in the same core subjects. Along with the standard bibliography recommended in this National Training Standard will form the basis for the individual dog and handler to progress and develop them into a highly professional and self motivated entity. It will give the end user a confidence in the search work of these teams which it is envisaged will lead to a greater level of successful prosecutions for arson and other related criminal acts than is the current position. In short a truly multi agency approach to reduce the incidence of this dreadful act.
- 6.1.3** The National Training Standard does not specify any individual training ethos or methodology which should be a matter of consideration for the individual training provider and his client. However it does give a structured framework for all interested parties to aspire too and will produce a quantified end product that has a training audit trail which can stay with the individual search team throughout its operational career.

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