


Atlanta Police Department Policy Manual		Standard Operating Procedure
Effective Date: June 4, 2021		APD.SOP.5141 Narcotics & Tracking Canines (K-9)
Applicable To: All sworn employees		Review Due: 2025
Approval Authority: Chief Rodney Bryant		
Signature: Signed by RB		Date Signed: 6/4/2021

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### 1. PURPOSE

To establish responsibilities, policies, and procedures for the utilization of the Atlanta Police Department's Narcotics & Tracking Canines (K-9).

### 2. POLICY

It is the policy of the Atlanta Police Department to provide trained and certified police narcotics detection and tracking canine (K-9) teams for the purpose of detecting illegal contraband and for searching and finding lost or missing persons in the City of Atlanta.  
(CALEA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 41.1.5)

### 3. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1 The Criminal Investigations Division (CID) Commander shall be responsible for the successful and consistent implementation of this standard operating procedure. He or she shall monitor the use and training of Narcotics & Tracking Canines (K-9) and their handlers.
- 3.2 The Special Enforcement Section (SES) and APEX Unit commanders shall be responsible for monitoring the successful and consistent implementation of the narcotics and tracking canines (K-9) policies, procedures, and training. He or she shall recommend administrative decisions such as, but not limited to, acquiring appropriate canines and the selection of canine handlers.
- 3.3 Supervisors and personnel assigned to the K-9 Unit shall seek continuing training courses to remain certified and improve operations.



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- 3.4 The Police Canine training coordinator shall be responsible for, but not limited to:
1. Assisting in the selection process of prospective handlers;
  2. Testing and selecting prospective canines for use by the unit;
  3. Training prospective canines and handlers to meet the required performance standards set forth by the United States Police Canine Association (USPCA) and/or the National Detector Dog Association (NNDDA) and/or the North American Police Work Dog Association (NAPWDA).
  4. Ensuring that the certified teams maintain the performance standards;
  5. Identifying any deficient areas of the unit teams and initiating any corrective or remedial training;
  6. Properly maintaining the department's canine facilities and equipment;
  7. Adhering to the state and federal protocol for obtaining, storing, handling, and record keeping for all narcotics (CALEA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 41.1.5); and
  8. Documenting and recommending any adjustments needed to keep the K-9 Unit operating at the highest operational level.
- 3.5 Police Canine Handler
1. The Police Canine Handler shall be responsible for, but not limited to, his or her availability for service calls requiring a narcotics detection/tracking canine, staying current on all training as required by the performance standards, the care and training of their canine partner, and the maintenance of their city-issued vehicle used to transport their canine. (CALEA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 41.1.5a)
  2. The police canine handler shall be available for service calls under the conditions specified by the unit supervisor.
  3. The police canine handler shall ensure that the canine receives proper nutrition, grooming, training, medical care, affection, and living conditions. The handler shall be responsible for the following: (CALEA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 41.1.5g,h)
    - a. Maintaining all department equipment under his or her control in a clean and serviceable condition. The basic equipment includes:
      - i. Kennel and surrounding area including the fence, gate, and lock;
      - ii. Collar and leash;
      - iii. Grooming supplies;
      - iv. Food, water, bowls.



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4. A transport utility vehicle shall be assigned to each handler for the transportation and safety of the canine. The handler shall be responsible for the vehicle assigned to them and shall take the vehicle home with them after each tour of duty. This vehicle shall be equipped with heat sensors and an alarm.
5. When a handler takes a vacation or extended amount of leave, the canine shall be maintained at the Atlanta Police Department's canine training and kennel facility or at a kennel designated by the department. In those situations, the handler shall give reasonable notice to the unit supervisor to ensure that the appropriate arrangements can be made.
6. The handler shall permit the unit supervisor to conduct periodic on-site inspections of affected areas at their residence as well as the areas maintained at the department's kennel and the department's vehicle to verify that conditions and equipment conform to this policy. These inspections shall be documented as outlined in APD.SOP.1090 "Inspections" and included in the unit's file.
7. Any changes in the living status of the handler that may affect the lodging or environment of the canine shall be reported to the unit supervisor immediately.
8. When off-duty, canines shall be maintained in the kennels provided by the department at the homes of their handlers. When a canine is kenneled at the handler's home, the gate shall be secured with a lock and the kennel should be out of public view. When off-duty, canines may be let out of their kennels while under the direct supervision of only their handler.
9. Under no circumstances shall the canine be lodged at another location unless approved by the unit supervisor.
10. When off-duty, handlers shall not involve the canine in any activity or conduct unless approved in advance by the unit supervisor.

#### 3.6 Responsibilities of a supervisor at the scene of a lost, missing person, or fleeing felon.

The supervisor requesting the tracking K-9 unit shall ensure the officers on scene do the following:

1. Coordinate with dispatch the setting up of a perimeter as soon as it is established that a K-9 unit shall be needed;
2. Verify the location the subject was last seen;
3. Shut off all vehicle engines in the area, if possible;
4. Avoid vehicle or foot movement in the area where the subject was last seen, and do not follow the path or direction the subject is thought to have taken.

#### 3.7 Responsibilities of officers and investigators at scene of lost, missing person, or fleeing felon:

1. Officers or investigators shall not touch evidence, trace material, or other property that had likely been touched or left behind by the person being sought unless it is necessary to do so to make it safe.



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2. If a motor vehicle that is suspected to have been driven or occupied by the subject is found and is empty of occupants and is not a hazard, then officers should refrain from entering the vehicle or walking around it.
3. Every effort must be made by officers and investigators at the scene to avoid contaminating the area with their scent. Unnecessary persons should be kept out of the area, including law enforcement officers.
4. A backup officer (preferably a K-9 officer) should be available to accompany the K-9 team on tracks. The backup officer shall follow the instructions of the primary K-9 officer.

#### 4. ACTION

##### 4.1 Use of Narcotics Detection Canine Teams (CALEA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 41.1.5a)

###### 4.1.1 A narcotics detection-trained canine may be used in accordance with current law to:

1. Assist in the search for narcotics during a search warrant service;
2. Obtain a search warrant by using the detection police canine in support of probable cause;
3. Search vehicles, buildings, bags, and any other articles deemed necessary.

###### 4.1.2 Certified police narcotics detection and tracking canines shall not be used to:

1. Search a person for narcotics;
2. Perform work they are not trained to do.

##### 4.2 Use of Canine Tracking Teams (CALEA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 41.1.5a)

###### 4.2.1 A tracking trained canine may be used in accordance with current law to:

1. Assist in the search for lost or missing people;
2. Search vehicles, buildings, and any other articles deemed necessary while searching for lost and/or missing people;
3. Search for fleeing felons.

###### 4.2.2 A tracking trained canine shall not be used to:

1. Perform work for which it has not been trained to do.

###### 4.2.3 Responsibilities of supervisor at scene of lost, missing person, or fleeing felon.

The supervisor requesting the tracking K-9 team shall ensure the officers on scene do the following:



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1. Coordinate with dispatch the setting up of a perimeter as soon as it is established that a K-9 unit shall be needed;
2. Stop and verify the location the subject was last seen;
3. Shut off all vehicle engines in the area, if possible;
4. Avoid vehicle or foot movement in the area where the subject was last seen, and do not follow the path or direction the subject is thought to have taken;
5. Officers or investigators shall not touch evidence, trace material, or other property that had likely been touched or left behind by the person being sought unless it is necessary to do so to make it safe;
6. In instances whereby a suspect's motor vehicle has been driven or occupied by the suspect and is found empty of occupants and determined not to be a hazard officers should refrain from entering the vehicle or walking around it;
7. Every effort must be made by officers and investigators at the scene to avoid contaminating the area with their scent. Unnecessary persons should be kept out of the area, including law enforcement officers; and
8. A backup officer (preferably a K-9 officer) should be available to accompany the K-9 team on tracks. The backup officer shall follow the instructions of the primary K-9 officer.

4.4

Police Canine Team Function  
(CALEA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 41.1.5a)

1. Whenever the certified police narcotics detection or tracking canine team is deployed, a Canine Tracking Log (Form 652) and/or an incident report shall be completed by the handler and turned in to the unit supervisor before the end of their tour of duty. This form shall be kept within the APEX Unit administrative files for three consecutive years.  
(CALEA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 41.1.5i)
2. The police canine teams shall function primarily as support units; however, they may be assigned by their unit supervisor to other functions based on the needs of the unit and/or department.
3. The Police Canine Teams shall not be assigned to handle matters that shall take them out of service for extended periods of time without prior approval from the team's unit supervisor.
4. Sworn employees within the department are encouraged to freely solicit the use of the Police Canine Teams when narcotic detection services are needed.
5. The teams' supervisor must approve all requests for police canine assistance outside the department's jurisdiction or from other law enforcement agencies.
6. Police canine teams shall not be used outside of the Atlanta Police Department to perform any assignment that is not consistent with this policy.



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7. Upon arrival at a scene, the canine handler has the ultimate decision as to whether or not the police canine shall be used for a specific assignment.
8. Police canine teams shall be on a scheduled rotation for callbacks. The canine handler shall be responsible for notifying the unit supervisor as soon as possible upon receiving a call back.
9. All requests for a police canine team for public or static presentations shall be submitted and approved by the unit supervisor prior to making any commitment.
10. Canine handlers shall not demonstrate any "Search" work to the public unless authorized to do so by the unit supervisor.

#### 4.5 Selection of Police Canine Handlers (CALEA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 41.1.5c)

##### 4.5.1 The following are the minimum qualifications for the assignment of police narcotics detection handler and tracking canine handler:

1. A sworn employee with a minimum of three years on the department;
2. Personal character traits such as:
  - a. Maturity;
  - b. Patience;
  - c. Initiative;
  - d. Flexibility;
  - e. Dependability;
  - f. Enthusiasm;
  - g. Emotional stability;
  - h. Good verbal and written communication skills.
3. Good physical condition that shall allow for training with the police canine and performing narcotics detection searches;
4. Have a good level of comfort and understanding of canines;
5. Good interpersonal skills with the public and other employees;
6. Home life should be compatible with training and maintaining a canine partner;
7. Reside in an adequately secured and fenced (minimum five-feet high fence with locking gate) single-family residence;



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8. Have sufficient land space around the residence to accommodate the building of a kennel by the Atlanta Police Department;
  9. Live within the allotted travel time as determined by the unit supervisor and remain within this response time while assigned to the unit;
  10. Agree to be assigned to the position for a minimum of five years.
- 4.5.2 The Police Canine Handler shall be compensated for time spent in the care, feeding, grooming, and other needs of the canine, also known as "Kennel Care," by 16 hours of compensatory time per month.
- 4.6 Selection of Police Canines  
(CALEA 6th ed. Standard 41.1.5b)
- 4.6.1 The following are determining factors for the selection of police narcotics detection and tracking canines:
1. Age of canine as determined by Passport or teeth examination;
  2. Health check-up to include X-rays for hip and spinal injuries or evidence of past injury and blood work to check for kidney function, liver function and common canine diseases;
  3. Temperament including drive and hunt drive;
  4. Off-site testing of temperament in different environments; and,
  5. K9 and Handler interaction.
- 4.6.2 After a canine candidate is selected, the K9 and an experienced handler shall complete the following:
1. Two-week binding period prior to the start of training;
  2. Six - eight-week imprint/training period with a contracted vendor; and,
  3. Four - six-week evaluation period.
- 4.7 Training
- 4.7.1 Before assignment in the field for narcotics detection and tracking, each police canine team shall complete the minimum required standards for narcotics/tracking canine (K-9) training and be certified to meet current United States Police Canine Association (U.S.P.C.A.) standards and/or the North American Police Work Dog Association (NAPWDA) and/or the National Narcotic Detector Dog Association (NNDDA). (CALEA 6th ed. Standard 41.1.5d)
- 4.7.2 Each police canine team shall be re-certified to U.S.P.C.A. standards, NNDDA standards and/or to the NAPWDA standards on an annual basis. This annual recertification shall be documented as to the team, date of training, and type of training. The training documentation shall be kept in the administrative files by the unit supervisor for a minimum period of three consecutive years. (CALEA 6th ed. Standard 41.1.5e, f)



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- 4.7.3 Additional training considerations are as follows:  
(CALEA 6th ed. Standard 41.1.5d)
1. Police canine teams shall receive weekly training by the Police Canine Training Coordinator;
  2. Police canine handlers are encouraged to engage in additional training with the approval of the unit supervisor;
  3. In order to ensure all training is consistent, no handler, trainer, nor outside vendor is authorized to train to a standard that is contrary to the policies of the Atlanta Police Department; and
  4. All police canine training shall be conducted while on-duty unless otherwise approved by the unit supervisor.
- 4.7.4 No police canine team failing U.S.P.C.A. or NAPWDA or the NNDDA certification shall be deployed in the field until certification is achieved.
- 4.7.5 All Police Canine training records shall be maintained in the Police Canine Handler's training file.  
(CALEA 6th ed. Standard 41.1.5f)
- 4.8 The Police Canine Training Coordinator:
1. Possess a minimum of five years' experience as a Police Canine Handler; and
  2. Be a law enforcement canine officer or former law enforcement canine officer.
- 4.9 Canine Training & Kennel Facility
- The canine training and kennel facility (1001 Cherokee Ave. SE) shall be under the direct supervision of the Police Canine Training Coordinator and the management of the Police Canine Unit supervisor. The facility shall be:
1. Approved for training purposes by the Atlanta Police Department;
  2. Certified by the U.S.P.C.A.;
  3. Equipped to provide the environment necessary to conduct various aspect of canine training as required by the U.S.P.C.A.;
  4. Adequate to accommodate an agility course as well as various types of searches; and
  5. Suitable offsite buildings and other structures for use in conducting searches, scent-work exercises, and secure areas for simulation exercises.
- 4.10 Canines – Public Access
- All police canines shall be kept on a leash when in areas that allow access to the public. Exceptions to this policy would include specific police operations for which the canines are trained.
1. Police canines shall not be left unattended in any area to which the public may have access.





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2. When the canine is left unattended in the police vehicle, all windows and doors shall be secured, and the alarm and heat sensor shall be activated.

#### 4.11 Bite or injury from use of police canine

If a bite or injury results from the use of the police canine, the handler's supervisor shall be notified as soon as practical, the incident shall be documented on a Police Canine Search Form (Form 652) and in an incident report. The report shall include, at a minimum, the following:

1. Photographs of the bite or injury after first providing medical attention for the injured party. The photographs shall be labeled "Police Canine Incident- Do Not Destroy," and booked into the Property Control Unit as evidence. If the injury requires medical attention, the injured person should be transported to an appropriate medical facility. In the event an in-custody suspect requires medical attention, an officer shall follow arrest procedures for injured prisoners and standby with the suspect until treatment has been rendered (as outlined in APD.SOP.3030 "Arrest Procedures").
2. Whenever a bite results, the handler shall notify the appropriate county Animal Control Office as soon, after the incident, as practical.
3. If a subject alleges an injury that is not visible, notification shall be made to a supervisor and the location of the alleged injury shall be photographed and documented in an incident report.

#### 4.12 Canine Injury and Medical Treatment

- 4.12.1 In the event a police canine is injured, the injury shall be immediately reported to the unit supervisor.
- 4.12.2 Depending on the severity of the injury, the canine shall either be treated by the designated veterinarian or transported to a designated emergency medical facility for treatment. If the handler and the canine are out of the city limits, the handler may use the nearest available veterinarian.
- 4.12.3 An injury to a canine shall be documented on a Canine Tracking Log (Form 652) and in an incident report with a case number.
- 4.12.4 The designated emergency medical treatment center or police canine veterinarian shall render emergency treatment, if practical. The handler shall notify the unit supervisor as soon as possible when emergency medical care for a canine is required.
- 4.12.5 Except during an emergency, the department-designated veterinarian shall render all routine medical attention for police canines.
- 4.12.6 All police canines shall have an annual physical check-up, including necessary shots, by the designated veterinarian. Non-emergency medical care of the police canine shall be coordinated through the unit supervisor.
- 4.12.7 The handler shall report any indication that a police canine is not in good physical condition to the unit supervisor as soon as possible.



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- 4.12.8 All records of canine medical treatment shall be maintained in the handler's personnel file.

4.13 Canine Retirement

When a police canine is no longer useful to the department for police assignments, the canine shall be offered to the handler. If the handler does not wish to maintain the canine, every attempt shall be made to find the canine a good home. In the event that all efforts by the department fail to place the canine in a good home, the canine shall be taken to the Atlanta Humane Society. Legislative approval of retirement shall be obtained prior to the placement of the K-9.

5. DEFINITIONS

- 5.1 Callbacks: A Police Canine Team that is on an "on-call" status in a scheduled rotation and subject to being called into service.
- 5.2 Canine Training Coordinator: A qualified person to conduct basic and in-service training for police narcotics/tracking canine (K-9) teams and must meet the qualification requirement set forth therein.
- 5.3 Certified Narcotics / Tracking Canine: A police canine that has been tested annually under the USPCA, NAPWDA and/or NNDDA standards and has achieved the desired rating therein.
- 5.4 In-Service Police Canine Training: Training conducted by a canine trainer to maintain skills that must be performed during re-evaluation.
- 5.5 Police Canine: A canine that has been trained by a canine trainer and is handled by a police officer handler in the performance of his/her duties used for law enforcement purposes or any law enforcement related activities.
- 5.6 Police Canine Team: A police canine and the handler (a sworn Atlanta police officer) who has satisfactorily completed all phases of the fundamentals of Police Narcotics Detection and/or Tracking Training.
- 5.7 Police Officer Handler: A law enforcement officer who officially utilizes a police canine in the course of assigned duties and responsibilities.

6. CANCELLATIONS

APD.SOP.5141 "Narcotics& Tracking Canines (K-9)", effective June 1, 2017.

7. REFERENCES

APD.SOP.1090 "Inspections"  
APD.SOP.3030 "Arrest Procedures"

Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 41.1.5.

Form APD 652 "Canine Tracking Log"

North American Police Work Dog Association (NAPWDA)  
National Narcotic Detector Dog Association (NNDDA)



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United States Police Canine Association (U.S.P.C.A.) Standards

8. SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

Addition of Section 4.6, Selection of Police Canines.

Major formatting and numbering revisions made to the entire policy.