




# Cocoa Beach Police Department

## Standard Operating Procedure



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<b>Subject:</b> K-9 Unit Operations	<b>Re-Evaluation:</b> 2026	
<b>Distribution:</b> All Members	<b>Related CFA Standards:</b> 14.11M, 14.12M	
<b>Approving Authority:</b> Chief of Police Wes Mullins		
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### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this standard operating procedure is to standardize the Department's K-9 operational procedures and functions.

### 2. SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all members of the Cocoa Beach Police Department.

### 3. POLICY

It is the policy of the Cocoa Beach Police Department to maintain a fully operational K-9 unit to support patrol and specialized operations.

### 4. DEFINITION(S)

- A. K-9 – a working dog that has been procured by the City of Cocoa Beach and specially trained to execute a number of specific law enforcement and public service tasks which make use of the K-9's intelligence, speed, agility, and sense of smell.
- B. K-9 HANDLER/K-9 OFFICER – a sworn officer specially trained in the care, handling, and ongoing training of a dog for law enforcement use.
- C. K-9 TEAM – the Cocoa Beach Police Department's K-9 handler and their assigned K-9.
- D. K-9 TRAINER – a sworn law enforcement officer specially trained and certified by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission as a K-9 trainer.
- E. ELECTRONIC REMOTE TRAINING COLLAR (E-COLLAR) – a remote-controlled electronic training collar that allows the K-9 handler to immediately enforce verbal or hand-signal commands without having to rely on the use of a leash.

### 5. PROCEDURES

- A. Deployment and Call-out (CFA 14.11MA)
  - 1. K-9 teams are assigned to the Patrol Operations Division. When supporting patrol units, the K-9 team reports to their next higher level of authority.
  - 2. If a conflict arises between a K-9 handler and the on-duty shift supervisor as to the use of the K-9, the K-9 handler shall utilize the K-9 to the best of their ability. A lieutenant or a major shall be notified to resolve the issue.
  - 3. The K-9 handler is responsible to ensure appropriate probable cause exists and that use of the K-9 is within the guidelines of the Cocoa Beach Police Department and local, state, and federal laws. Any concerns regarding policy or legality shall be directed to the K-9 handler's next higher level of authority.
  - 4. During regular K-9 duty hours, an officer may request the use of a K-9 team.

5. Routine dispatch of K-9 teams to calls that will remove the K-9 team from service for extended periods of time and do not utilize the abilities and training of the team shall be avoided.
  6. The K-9 team shall attempt to complete any self-initiated calls and assist other law enforcement units as backup when possible.
  7. While K-9 teams are off-duty, the on-duty shift supervisor may authorize any callout after a scene has been evaluated.
    - a. If a K-9 team is unable to respond and/or an immediate response is necessary, the on duty-shift supervisor may request a mutual aid response of a K-9 from another jurisdiction.
- B. Unauthorized Uses of K-9s (CFA 14.11MA)
1. K-9 handlers should use any alternative possible to effect an arrest of a highly intoxicated or feeble person who obviously could not escape or resist the K-9 handler or other officers before deploying a K-9.
  2. K-9s will not be utilized to intimidate or coerce.
  3. K-9s will not be utilized after a suspect surrenders, is secured, or complies with the commands of the K-9 handler, and no longer poses a threat.
  4. K-9s will not be utilized in the apprehension of non-violent individuals suspected of committing a misdemeanor or infraction.
  5. The K-9 handler is charged with the responsibility of using proper discretion regarding when, how, and where to deploy a K-9.
- C. Authorized Uses of K-9s (CFA14.11MAC)
1. Tracking
    - a. Tracks can be conducted for missing, injured, or endangered persons, in addition to aiding in the apprehension of criminal suspects. The following procedures shall be followed when K-9 teams are requested to track:
      - (1) When the scene has been evaluated and a need for the K-9 team has been established, a K-9 team may be called to respond. The K-9 team may be cancelled by the on-duty shift supervisor if it is determined that the response of the K-9 team is no longer necessary.
      - (2) The scene shall be secured by on-scene officers. The perimeter shall be maintained until the K-9 team arrives and advises that the track has concluded.
      - (3) Every attempt shall be made to avoid contamination of a crime scene and the pathways of escape. Unauthorized persons shall not be permitted inside the perimeter. In the absence of a supervisor, the initial officer at the scene shall determine who is authorized to enter the perimeter.
      - (4) Physical or chemical evidence of any scent article at a scene shall not be contaminated.
      - (5) K-9 handlers shall coordinate with other officers on scene. Information pertaining to the type of crime, suspect description, weapon information, time lapse, and perimeter information shall be made available to the K-9 handler as soon as possible. The responding officer in charge of the scene or the on-duty shift supervisor shall be responsible for providing the K-9 handler with this and any other pertinent information.
      - (6) Officers shall assist the K-9 team as directed by the K-9 handler and/or the on-duty shift supervisor.
      - (7) If the circumstances warrant, the Brevard County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) Aviation Unit may be used in conjunction with the K-9 team. Once the K-9 team initiates the search or track, the K-9 handler and the Aviation Unit will coordinate their activities to the fullest extent practical.
      - (8) Care shall be taken to maintain minimum radio traffic during the search, so the K-9 handler and the Aviation Unit have an open line of communication.

- (9) When prudent a verbal K-9 warning shall be announced prior to releasing the K-9 to avoid injuries to innocent bystanders and/or allow the suspect an opportunity to surrender. This may not always be possible due to the circumstances of the incident. The warning shall only be given by the K-9 handler and shall announce the K-9 handler's presence, authority, and the imminent release of the K-9. Example: "Cocoa Beach Police Department K-9! Come out or I will release the dog!" Warnings will not be given prior to the K-9 team's arrival as a ploy for surrender.
2. Area Search
  - a. An area search may be conducted if there is no starting point for a track. The following procedures shall be followed in addition to the tracking procedures listed above:
    - (1) The K-9 team shall search an open area utilizing the airborne scent to locate hiding spots.
    - (2) The area search shall be conducted "on lead" unless the area is enclosed, or the K-9 is deployed utilizing an "e-collar".
    - (3) Officers on the perimeter shall use care and attempt to stay close to their vehicles during the search.
    - (4) Unless extenuating circumstances exist, officers shall not allow anyone to enter the perimeter during an area search.
    - (5) When prudent a verbal K-9 warning shall be announced prior to releasing the K-9 as specified in [section C\(1\)\(a\)\(9\)](#) above.
3. Building Search
  - a. A building search may be conducted when it is reasonably believed that a suspect is concealing themselves inside. The following procedures shall be followed when a K-9 conducts a building search:
    - (1) The first officer on scene will deploy backup units to establish a perimeter around the building.
    - (2) When the scene has been evaluated and a need for the K-9 team has been established, a K-9 team may be called to respond. The K-9 team may be cancelled by the on-duty shift supervisor if it is determined that the response of the K-9 team is no longer necessary.
    - (3) Unless extenuating circumstances exist, on-scene officers shall maintain the perimeter and not allow anyone to enter the building until the K-9 team arrives. Officers shall not stand near the point of entry or exit.
    - (4) The K-9 handler shall be briefed on the circumstances upon their arrival. Attention shall be given to entry and exit points, movement inside the building, or and other pertinent information.
    - (5) Prior to the K-9 team conducting a building search, a verbal K-9 warning shall be announced as specified in [section C\(1\)\(a\)\(9\)](#) above.
4. Crowd Control
  - a. K-9 teams may be utilized for crowd control. The following procedures shall be followed when K-9 teams are used for crowd control:
    - (1) Once the need for crowd control has been established, the on-duty shift supervisor may approve the use of the K-9 team.
    - (2) K-9 teams will only be used for crowd control in situations when all other available forms of lesser force have failed or would fail in the opinion of the on-duty shift supervisor or K-9 handler.
    - (3) K-9s shall not be utilized to apprehend anyone unless the actions of the crowd escalate to the point where the K-9 handler or other officers are in danger of physical harm.
    - (4) The K-9 handler shall keep the K-9 "on lead" unless the situation dictates that the K-9 should be released to apprehend and control a suspect.

5. Protection
    - a. A K-9 handler may utilize their K-9 for self-protection and to assist other law enforcement officers or the public as necessary in accordance with laws.
  6. Drug Search
    - a. The following procedures shall be followed when a K-9 team is requested to conduct a drug search:
      - (1) Once the need for a K-9 drug search has been established, the on-duty shift supervisor may approve the use of the K-9 team. The K-9 team may be cancelled by the on-duty shift supervisor if it is determined that the response of the K-9 team is no longer necessary.
      - (2) The officer on scene will be responsible for maintaining the scene and ensuring that it is not contaminated. The scene shall not be searched prior to the K-9 team's arrival.
      - (3) It is the responsibility of the K-9 handler to explain the capabilities and limitations of their K-9.
      - (4) The officer on scene shall be prepared to take the appropriate action if the K-9 gives a positive alert indicating the presence of narcotic/drug odors. Example: search, obtain a search warrant, arrest, and assume responsibility for any evidence.
      - (5) Dual Purpose K9s will not be used to search for narcotics/drugs on a person.
      - (6) It is preferred that doors and windows of structures or vehicles that are to be searched remain closed until the K-9 team begins the search.
  7. Public Relations
    - a. The Cocoa Beach Police Department's K-9 Unit is a vital tool to enhance public relations in the community. Requests for public demonstrations will be routed through a lieutenant.
- D. Safety Precautions
1. K-9 Handler Injury
    - a. In the event a K-9 handler is injured:
      - (1) Neither the vehicle nor the handler will be approached unless the K-9 is secure or the injury is life threatening.
      - (2) A lieutenant and/or a major shall be notified immediately to respond.
      - (3) If able the injured K-9 handler will attempt to control the K-9.
      - (4) Attempts will be made to contact another COCOA BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT K-9 handler to come take custody of the K9. If a COCOA BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT handler is not able to take custody, a K-9 handler from another jurisdiction may be considered. If a K9 handler is not able to take custody, discretionary use of the K9 handler's family may be considered to control the K-9.
      - (5) If officers are unable to secure the K9 and there is a direct imminent threat to the officers or the public, disabling force may be necessary to secure the K-9. This action must be a last resort.
  2. K-9 Injury
    - a. In the event a K-9 is injured the K-9 handler will:
      - (1) Ensure the scene is safe.
      - (2) Render aid to the K-9.
      - (3) If the K-9 requires medical attention, transport the K-9 to the appropriate animal hospital.
      - (4) Notify a lieutenant and a major.
- E. Working with K-9 Teams
1. Officers shall follow the K-9 handler's instructions when requested to assist.

2. Officers shall provide cover for the K-9 team while they are conducting a search. It is important for the cover officer to be aware of their surroundings and be careful not to focus on watching the K-9. Normally, only one officer will accompany the K-9 team.
  3. Officers will not approach the K-9 without the K-9 handler's permission and notification.
  4. Officers will never tease a K-9.
- F. Assisting Other Agencies
1. Resources permitting, K-9 teams may assist other law enforcement agencies.
  2. All requests for assistance will be approved by the on-duty shift supervisor, or higher authority.
  3. When assisting other agencies, K-9 teams shall adhere to all policies and procedures of the Cocoa Beach Police Department as well as mutual aid agreements.
- G. Selection of K-9 Handlers (CFA 14.11MB)
1. Notification of a vacancy in the K-9 Unit will be made via memorandum by the Chief of Police, or designee. A sworn officer wishing to apply for a position with the K-9 Unit may do so in accordance with the instructions in the memorandum. Following a K-9 review panel, a selection will be made by Command Staff and their designee(s). The following should be considered:
    - a. Recommendations from the review panel
    - b. Results of a background check – attendance, attendance reports, driving record, performance evaluations, commendations, counsels/reprimands, internal affairs records, etc.
      - (1) Applicants who have a sustained use of force complaint in the previous two years from the date of posting will not be considered for a position in the K-9 Unit.
    - c. Education, training, and special skills – advanced training schools, prior experience in the field of law enforcement, K-9s, etc.
    - d. The applicant's reason for seeking the position, their suitability for the position (whether or not they will be able to work with a K-9 and provide a suitable living environment for the K-9 at their home), and how the applicant's selection would benefit the unit.
    - e. Applicants shall have successfully completed the Cocoa Beach Police Department Field Training Program.
- H. Training (CFA 14.11ME)
1. All training of the K-9 Unit shall be coordinated through the Training Coordinator, or designee. The Training Coordinator, or designee, is responsible for all K-9 team training records. Training will be directed toward the following:
    - a. The training needs of the overall unit and individual K-9 teams may vary, training may be customized to fit those needs.
    - b. Training shall be in accordance with established and accepted procedures as instructed in K-9 Handler Certification School or other reputable sources to the standard set forth by Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission (CJSTC).
    - c. K-9 teams shall maintain sufficient proficiency to successfully perform their duties and the required certification standards.
    - d. K-9 teams shall attend a minimum of sixteen (16) hours of in-service training in a calendar month dedicated to regular canine maintenance training to ensure a high level of performance for both the handler and the K-9. In-service training must be completed with an FDLE certified trainer. In the event of a scheduling conflict, a higher authority may excuse the K-9 handler from a training session, but the session must be made up in that calendar month.
    - e. All K-9 teams shall attend an initial Basic K9 Patrol School course approved by the FDLE CJSTC and then re-certify annually according to FDLE CJSTC requirements. (CFA 14.11MD)
- I. Drug Detection Training Aids (CFA 14.12M)
1. Cocoa Beach Police Department does not maintain drug/narcotic training aids.

2. K-9 teams will utilize training aids of other law enforcement agencies while attending in-service training.
- J. Guidelines for Bite Situations
1. K-9 handlers shall utilize all reasonable means to effect an apprehension without incurring a K-9 bite; however, it is recognized that there are times when this would be an impossible task.
  2. The following are considered to be bite situations:
    - a. When the K-9 handler or the K-9 is assaulted.
    - b. To stop an offender who has committed a violent crime or felony.
    - c. To prevent injury to an officer or the public.
    - d. Under certain circumstances, when the K-9 locates a hidden suspect, and the bite cannot be prevented by the K-9 handler (i.e. spontaneous bite).
  3. K-9s shall not be utilized to apprehend non-violent individuals suspected of committing a misdemeanor or infraction.
  4. The K-9 handler is charged with the responsibility of using proper discretion regarding how, when, and where to deploy a K-9.
- K. K-9 Inflicted Injuries to Suspect(s)
1. In the event that a Cocoa Beach Police Department working K-9 bites a suspect, the K-9 handler, without placing the K-9 team in unnecessary peril, will:
    - a. First control the K-9.
    - b. Direct assisting officers to secure the suspect.
    - c. Render first aid and request appropriate medical assistance. It will be the K-9 handler's responsibility to ensure timely treatment of wounds.
    - d. When possible, remain on the scene and contact the on-duty shift supervisor to respond.
    - e. Any K-9 inflicted injury reports shall be completed prior to the K-9 handler going off-duty. This includes the following:
      - (1) Code A, Code B, or supplemental Report (depending on the type of incident).
      - (2) [Response to Resistance Report](#) (Refer to SOP [240.20 – Response to Resistance](#)).
      - (3) Department approved K-9 usage tracking software.
    - f. Obtain digital photographs of the individual bitten, to include the area of the body affected by the bite, as well as photographs that depict the individual's full body and face. This may be done at the scene, police department, or hospital, but will preferably be done before treatment unless obtaining the photographs would cause unnecessary delay in providing critical medical treatment. The digital photographs will be placed in evidence.
    - g. Notify a lieutenant and a major as soon as possible.
- L. Accidental K-9 Inflicted Injuries
1. The same procedures used for "[K-9 Inflicted Injuries to Suspects](#)" shall apply to accidental injuries.
  2. The K-9 handler will make no statement as to the liability or fault in the matter.
  3. If a minor accidental bite occurs during authorized K-9 training, notification will be made to a lieutenant who will refer to City of Cocoa Beach policy as it relates to workplace mishaps, accidents, and injuries, as well as ensuring completion of appropriate reports as outlined in [section K\(1\)\(e\)](#).
- M. K-9 Handler Compensation
1. In order to comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act of February 19, 1985, and the United States Supreme Court Ruling in Garcia v. San Antonio Metropolitan Transit Authority, the K-9 handlers will receive the following compensation in relation to their duties:
    - a. The K-9 handler will be regularly scheduled to work eight (8) ten (10) hour shifts each two- (2) week pay period in their K-9 officer assignment.
    - b. On each of the K-9 handler's eight (8) regularly scheduled work shifts in the two- (2) week pay period, the K-9 handler will end their scheduled work shifts one (1) hour earlier than scheduled

but shall be paid their regular rate of pay for the additional scheduled hour, unless the K-9 is kenneled at the expense of the City. This will provide the K-9 handler with eight (8) hours of paid time in the two- (2) week pay period for the off-duty care of the K-9. The additional scheduled hour each regularly scheduled work shift shall be considered as hours worked for the purpose of overtime calculations.

- c. When taking leave of any kind for an entire work shift, the K-9 handler will be charged with one (1) hour less leave than their scheduled hours but will be paid their regular rate of pay for the additional scheduled hour, unless the K-9 is kenneled at the expense of the City. The additional hour of leave shall not be considered as hours worked for the purpose of overtime calculations.
- d. The K-9 handler shall not spend more time caring for the K-9 than eight (8) hours of paid time without prior approval by a higher authority or member of Department management in an emergency situation. If the additional time is approved, the K-9 handler shall fully and accurately report the additional time using the City's regular process for reporting hours worked and will be paid for the additional time.

N. Patrol K-9 Vehicle

1. Vehicle Usage

- a. The primary use of the K-9 vehicle is for the transportation and safety of the police K-9, vehicle occupants, and the public.
- b. The vehicle is equipped with an interior temperature-monitoring device (heat alarm) to monitor the temperature inside the vehicle.
- c. The K-9 vehicle is to be operated by a K-9 handler for the purpose of patrol and transportation of their K-9 including to and from veterinary appointments.
- d. The vehicle conforms to the standards set as an authorized apprehension vehicle, fully equipped with emergency equipment.
- e. The vehicle is used in the same manner as a patrol vehicle with the exception of transportation of persons in custody, unless specifically designed for such use.

2. Vehicle Operation and Maintenance

- a. No one other than the K-9 handler should be operating the vehicle while the K-9 is present, unless instructed to do so by the K-9 handler or in an emergency situation.
- b. Operators of the vehicle must be familiar with the special equipment contained on and within the vehicle.
- c. The K-9 handler assigned the vehicle is responsible for:
  - (1) Ensuring all maintenance and repairs are performed on the vehicle
  - (2) Ensuring all equipment, including specialty equipment, is in proper working order
  - (3) Maintaining a log of weekly testing of the temperature monitoring device
  - (4) Ensuring the temperature monitoring device is de-activated when off-duty

3. Equipment

- a. Equipment necessary for the performance of the K-9 team's function is to be stored in the vehicle. Such equipment includes, but is not limited to:
  - (1) Extra duty uniform
  - (2) Dog food
  - (3) Extra bottled water
  - (4) Tracking harness
  - (5) Dog leashes, choke chains, etc.
  - (6) Bite sleeve

O. Care of the Police K-9

- 1. The following are the duties and responsibilities of the K-9 handler in the care of the K-9

- a. Feeding – The K-9 should be fed when needed as determined by the K-9 handler to maintain the health of the K-9 and fresh water readily accessible.
  - b. Grooming – The K-9's coat should be brushed and combed as needed to maintain the health of the K-9.
  - c. Bathing – The K-9 handler is required to bathe the K-9 when needed.
  - d. When the K-9 is left unattended in the police vehicle, every effort will be made to ensure the inside of the vehicle remains cool, under 86 degrees Fahrenheit, and there is ample water for the K-9. If possible, the vehicle will be parked in a manner that takes advantage of areas protected from direct sunlight. The vehicle interior heat monitoring system will be utilized whenever the K-9 is present in the vehicle.
  - e. In the event a K-9 gets loose from the kennel or custody/control of the K-9 handler, the following will occur:
    - (1) A lieutenant, the communications center, and the on-duty shift supervisor will be notified immediately. The on-duty shift supervisor shall assist in the search for the K-9.
    - (2) All available marked units will be summoned to the area to search for the K-9.
    - (3) The K-9 handler will advise all units assisting in the search, if they should come in contact with the loose K-9, they should open their rear door, allow the K-9 to jump in, close the door, and contact the K-9 handler to meet and retrieve the K-9.
    - (4) When possible, only the K-9 handler should attempt to make physical contact with the K-9.
    - (5) The Aviation Unit may be notified and requested to respond to assist in the search.
    - (6) A lieutenant will submit an After-Action Report via memorandum through the chain of command to the Chief of Police.
- P. Department Costs and Responsibilities
1. The City/Department shall incur all costs associated with the following:
    - a. Food
    - b. Veterinary care
    - c. Cleaning and grooming supplies
    - d. K-9 equipment for patrol and training
    - e. Required licenses and memberships
    - f. Transportation
    - g. Vehicle equipment
    - h. Uniforms
    - i. Kenneling costs
  2. The officer shall not be permitted to incur any costs associated with City-assigned Police K-9 absent prior approval, except in emergency situations.
- Q. Reports (CFA 14.11MF)
1. K-9 handlers shall complete reports for all K-9 related activities. Reports include, but are not limited to:
    - a. Code A, Code B, or Supplemental Reports (depending on the type of incident).
    - b. [Response to Resistance Report](#) (refer to SOP [240.20 – Response to Resistance](#)).
    - c. Department approved K-9 usage tracking software.
    - d. If the incident is initiated by a K-9 handler, they will be responsible for completion of the entire case packet.
  2. The on-duty shift supervisor or K-9 handler's next level of authority will ensure that all case reports are completed and approved.
  3. All K-9-inflicted injuries to suspects and accidental K-9-inflicted injuries will require an entire case report.