



Colorado Springs Police Department General Order

1203 Canine (K-9) Unit

Section 1200: Critical Incident Functions

Effective Date: 10/6/2023

Supersedes Date: 1/31/2022

.01 Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to outline the operational procedures for the Canine (K-9) Unit and to specify conditions binding upon other department personnel.

.02 Cross Reference

[GO 500 Use of Force](#)

[GO 510 Reporting Use of Force](#)

[K9-01 Canine Unit](#)

.03 Discussion

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.04 Policy

A police service dog (PSD) is primarily a locating tool, using its superior sense of smell, hearing, and physical abilities to find a concealed person(s) and/or evidence.

When a PSD is utilized to apprehend a suspect, it should be considered a use of less-lethal force (e.g., *Vera Cruz v. Escondido, 1997*; *Robinette v. Barnes, 1988*) applied consistently with directives of this general order and in accordance with GO 500 Use of Force.

Canine handlers will maintain control of their PSDs at all times. The final decision and responsibility for the legal application of the PSD rests with the handler, not the on-scene incident commander/supervisor.

.05 Definitions

Accidental contact: An unintentional or accidental contact occurs when a PSD bites a citizen or department member without the direction or command of the handler.

Canine apprehension: Gaining control and custody of a suspect that is the direct result or clearly due to the deployment of a canine. The apprehension may be the result of a contact or surrender of the suspect prior to contact.

Canine contact: In the context of this policy, the physical biting of a person by the PSD.

Canine deployment: The use of a PSD on-lead or off-lead to locate suspects, apprehend suspects, narcotics detection, building searches, field searches, tracking, or conduct article searches.

Canine Team/Handler Team: A certified department handler and their assigned police service dog.

Violent Felony: For this policy, it means a felony against a person in which a perpetrator uses physical force that may cause serious bodily injury or death. Also, means a felony involving the use or threatened use of a deadly weapon. Some examples include murder, kidnapping, assault in the first or second degree, aggravated robbery, felony sexual assault, arson in the first degree, or hit and run crash involving death or serious bodily injury.

.10 Appropriate Utilization

Canine teams are assigned to regular patrol shifts and available on-call 24-hours a day, seven days a week. Canine teams may be requested to begin responding to a scene by any unit or dispatcher who believes canine assistance will be helpful. If no canine team is on shift, only a sergeant or above can authorize the call-out of a canine team. Ideally, a sergeant or corporal will be on scene of the incident to direct patrol resources in accordance with Section .30 Patrol Officer/Supervisor Responsibilities.

Canine officers should document the factors leading to their deployment of a PSD in their reports.

Canine teams are authorized to deploy a canine in the following circumstances:

- To protect the handler, another officer, or citizen from imminent attack or risk of serious bodily injury
- To locate and apprehend a suspect reasonably believed to have been involved in a violent felony

- To locate or apprehend a felony suspect, except motor vehicle theft (see bullet below), who the handler reasonably believes to be dangerous. Factors to consider, both individually and collectively, when determining to deploy the PSD may include the following:
 - Whether probable cause exists for a felony crime
 - Reasonably believes suspect to be in possession of a weapon
 - Known access or history of weapons
 - A criminal history of violence against others
 - A criminal history of possessing or using deadly weapons
 - Whether the suspect can be positively identified as the offender when apprehended

A PSD may not be used to apprehend someone who has a felony warrant for Failure to Appear or Failure to Comply when the individual will not be booked into CJC.

- To apprehend a felony motor vehicle theft suspect when:
 - The suspect is reasonably believed to be armed, or
 - Suspect is known to have a violent criminal history
- To conduct a building search for a suspect where it is reasonable to believe a felony crime other than trespassing has occurred
- To conduct a search for contraband or evidence
- PSDs may, in rare circumstances, be used to search for missing at-risk individuals or missing children where evidence of foul play or grievous harm exists. Due to the fact PSDs are trained for apprehension, this rare exception must be approved by the Commander of the Specialized Enforcement Division (SED). Officers in need of a single purpose search canine are encouraged to contact the El Paso County Search and Rescue before contacting the canine unit.
- In exigent circumstances, the SED Commander or TacOps Lieutenant may authorize a canine deployment in situations not referenced above.

PSDs will not be deployed to control or manage a crowd, protest, or demonstration.

Members of the canine unit will not be deployed in plain clothes or in an undercover capacity with their PSD. This prohibition does not apply to canines used by Metro Vice, Narcotics, and Intelligence.

All requests for public education presentations will be facilitated through the canine unit sergeant.

All media requests for the canine unit will be facilitated through the PIO office.

.20 Canine Use of Force

Canine Apprehension Considerations

The canine handler is responsible for the PSD and its actions. The handler will exercise control over their PSD at all times.

The use of a PSD for apprehension is, pursuant to [GO 500 Use of Force](#), an application of force and may only be applied when a subject is displaying active resistance or active aggression as defined in that general order. The use of a PSD for apprehension must be in accordance with [GO 500 Use of Force](#).

Handlers will further consider the following:

- Whether the suspect is armed
- The age of the suspect
- The criminal history of the suspect, if known
- Known potential danger to the public or others
- Level of pedestrian traffic within the area
- Whether a proper and secure perimeter was established

The handler should coordinate with the on-scene officers and supervisors to develop a plan as to how they will safely address the problem, search for the suspect, and execute the arrest.

When the location of a hiding suspect has been identified, handlers should attempt alternative tactics, if safe and feasible, such as, but not limited to, issuing an additional canine warning to the suspect, or using other available less lethal tools.

Prior to releasing the PSD, the handler must take reasonable steps to ensure the person to be apprehended is the suspect.

The handler should verbally warn the suspect the PSD is going to be released providing sufficient time for the warning to be observed, unless to do so would unduly place the handler, other officers, or citizens at risk of injury or death:

- If possible, the handler will give at least two warnings in a loud clear manner. The warning will include the following elements (*Kuha v. City of Minnetonka*):

- Identify self as a police officer of Colorado Springs Police Department
 - Request for peaceful surrender
 - The consequences for not surrendering (e.g., “my dog will bite you.”)
- Handlers should consider the use of a patrol vehicle PA system or other amplification method to make the announcements in the direction of the last known location of the suspect.
 - Announcements should, when possible, be acknowledged by other officers in the area over the police radio, including the location from where they heard the announcement.
 - If searching a large or multi-floor building, periodic announcements should be made as the canine team enters a new building section or floor.
 - If it is determined the suspect speaks a language other than English, the handler should, if time permits, attempt to have an officer summoned to the scene who can issue the warning in the suspect’s native language.
 - The warning announcements may be omitted if the handler has specific and articulable facts to indicate a canine announcement would put officers or the public in additional and unnecessary danger. These facts must be documented in the police report.

Whenever the deployment of a police canine, whether on-lead or off-lead, for the purpose of searching for and/or apprehending a suspect, results in contact with a subject, regardless of any injuries sustained, the incident will be considered a use of force.

Post-Contact Responsibilities

In the event of a canine contact, the following protocol applies:

- Remove the canine from contact as soon as the suspect is no longer a threat.
- Assure necessary medical treatment is obtained for the suspect.
- Assure a patrol supervisor is notified and responds to the scene.
- Notify the TEU unit supervisor or their designee. In their absence, the tactical operations section lieutenant should be notified.
- Ensure all injuries are photographed.

The TEU unit supervisor will determine if an interview of the injured person is appropriate, and if so, will conduct that interview.

Any time a PSD causes serious bodily injury (SBI), as determined by the attending physician, the TEU unit supervisor or their designee will notify the Violent Crimes section of the canine contact, via email at [REDACTED]. The notification will include the call for service number, and case number. In the event of a significant injury or extremely unusual circumstance (e.g., cut artery, contact on the head or neck, extreme tearing, etc.) the canine unit supervisor or his designee will notify the Violent Crimes section on-call sergeant for determination of whether a response by a detective is required.

Use of Force Reporting

Canine handlers will ensure any PSD contact is documented pursuant to [GO 510 Reporting Use of Force](#). Handlers will ensure the contact is documented in a department case report or report supplement.

In addition to required documentation outlined in [GO 510 Reporting Use of Force](#), the following information should be included in the supplement report:

- Information provided to the canine handler upon arrival at the scene regarding the nature of the crime, suspect information, and who briefed that information.
- Any efforts by other officers to apprehend the suspect prior to the canine team's arrival.
- Any efforts attempted to de-escalate or minimize injury by the canine handler or officers prior to the deployment of the canine.

An administrative Canine Use of Force report will be completed in BlueTeam. The following will be included in the BlueTeam report:

- Canine contact supervisor review and insight memorandum
- BWC recording of the suspect interview, if applicable
- Photographs of the scene
- Photograph of injuries
- Surveillance footage (when available)

The TEU unit supervisor will review all reports related to the canine contact, body worn camera footage, and call screens. This review will be documented on the canine contact supervisor memorandum. The TEU unit supervisor will forward the BlueTeam Canine Contact Report to the tactical operations section lieutenant, along with a finding as to the appropriateness of the contact.

.30 Police Officer/Supervisor Responsibilities

Officers, detectives, or supervisors performing duties with, or in the presence of, a canine team, should be aware of these responsibilities for successful PSD deployment.

Tactical Considerations

- Establish containment around the suspect's last known location. Use as many containment officers as necessary to effectively prevent escape.
- The PSD looks for the freshest human odor on the scene; therefore, do not enter a search area before the canine team arrives. If an officer loses sight of a suspect during a foot pursuit, establish containment at the last known location and the surrounding area. The longer the area is searched on foot by officers, the more contaminated the area becomes, limiting the effectiveness of the PSD.
- [REDACTED]
- Brief the responding canine team regarding the circumstances of the incident including, but not limited to, all known suspect information including physical description, approximate age, whether the suspect is reasonably believed to be armed, last known direction of travel, known crimes committed by the suspect, and any active/outstanding arrest warrants.
- The sole responsibility for deploying a PSD is based upon the totality of the circumstances and is at the direction and authority of the canine handler.
 - Supervisors in conflict with the decision of the handler will defer to the handler.
 - The supervisor may call the TEU sergeant or tactical operations lieutenant after the call for service is complete for further clarification.
- Canine handlers have the authority to direct the actions of on-scene personnel to assist or to take other measures that will facilitate the canine's efficiency and effectiveness. Officers will follow the directions of the handler while personnel are attempting to locate a suspect.
- Arrests made or evidence collected by canine team will be considered as having been accomplished by the requesting officer. The requesting officer, following normal departmental procedures, is responsible for processing the suspect(s) and evidence obtained with canine team assistance.

General Considerations

- Police personnel are prohibited from teasing or harassing PSD, the assigned trainers, or the PSD handlers in any manner.
- Police personnel may pet a PSD only with the permission of, and in the presence of, the assigned handler.
 - Police personnel must not hug or lean close to the head of a PSD while petting it.
- Police personnel must not offer food or drink to a PSD unless permission has been obtained from the assigned handler.
- With the exception of emergencies, or prior approval of any assigned handler, other police personnel must not give commands to a PSD.

.40 Reporting Accidental Contacts

Due to the dynamic nature of working with PSDs, accidental contacts sometimes occur. If an accidental contact occurs, the handler will follow the same procedures outlined in the *Post Contact Responsibilities* section, with two exceptions:

- The handler will contact the TEU sergeant or their designee, rather than another sergeant.
- The handler will not complete a BlueTeam report. Instead, the PSD handler will document the accidental contact in an internal memorandum detailing the events that led to the unintentional contact. The TEU sergeant and PSD handler will meet with the unit trainer to evaluate the situation. The trainer will submit a memo, through the chain of command, to the Commander of the SED. At a minimum, the memo will include:
 - A summary of the contact from the trainer's perspective
 - The proximate cause of the contact
 - What corrective actions, if any, should be implemented to mitigate a repeat contact of similar nature or circumstances.

The incident will be reviewed by each member in the chain of command and submitted to the Investigations & Special Operations Bureau deputy chief. After review by the deputy chief, the documentation will be returned to the SED commander to be archived in the PSD's training file.

.50 Request by Outside Agencies

The patrol duty lieutenant will coordinate and approve requests by other agencies for canine assistance outside the jurisdiction of CSPD. An on-duty Lieutenant, or equivalent official, in the requesting jurisdiction, must initiate the request. The duty lieutenant will ensure a formal request is transmitted to the department, either via teletype or via email after approving the request.

.60 Training and Qualifications

The officers and PSDs of the canine unit undergo an extensive selection and training process, in accordance with [K9-01 Canine Unit](#).