

CANINE UNIT

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Omaha Police Department (OPD) to provide professionally trained and maintained Canine Teams to assist in the daily operations of the department. Canine Teams assigned to the Canine Unit are commanded by a sergeant and report to the Tactical Operations Section Captain.

PROCEDURE:

I. Deployment

- A. Canine Teams patrol in modified, specially-equipped, cruisers designated and clearly marked "Canine Unit."
- B. If a Canine Team is not on-duty and a serious incident justifies a call-in, command officers shall contact the Canine Unit sergeant or Tactical Operations Section Captain 24 hours/7 days a week for authorization to call in a Canine Team.
- C. The following calls are designated for automatic Canine Team response while on routine patrol:
 1. Burglary in-progress calls, intrusion alarms, and/or robbery alarms when evidence of forced entry exists or a suspect is still believed to be in the area.
 2. All felony or serious misdemeanor crimes where the suspect has fled on foot and a possible tracking scenario, suspect search, area search, or building search could develop.
- D. The Canine Team may be used by Uniform Patrol Bureau (UPB) officers for searches, narcotics detection, criminal apprehensions, and tracking as described in this policy.

NOTE: The Canine Unit uses both dual-purpose canines (canines used for both narcotics detection and criminal apprehensions), as well as canines used only for narcotics detection.
- E. The final decision to apply a canine to a specific police operation shall remain with the canine handler.
- F. A detailed description of the operations and administration of the Canine Unit is available in the Canine Unit's Operations Manual.
- G. The OPD Canine Unit shall be the primary Canine Unit used during prolonged tactical situations. If no OPD Canine Team is available and an outside agency responds due to exigency, they may remain until relieved by an OPD Canine Team. Command on scene shall contact 911 dispatch for canine call out.

II. General Guidelines for OPD Sworn Employees

- A. Officers shall not, under any circumstances, strike a canine handler or engage in any horseplay with a canine handler while the Handler's canine is present. All officers shall remember that the canine has been trained to protect the canine handler from any perceived threat.
- B. Any violations of the below-listed rules shall immediately be reported through the Canine Unit's chain of command for possible disciplinary action. Officers shall never do any of the following unless trained and instructed to do so by the handler:
 1. Strike or discipline the police canine.

2. Tease or agitate the canine (inside or outside of the Canine Team's vehicle).
3. Give the canine any commands.
4. Feed the canine without the canine handler's permission.
5. Attempt to play with the canine without first obtaining the canine handler's permission and having the canine handler present.
6. Enter the Canine Team vehicle without the canine handler's knowledge or presence unless in an emergency situation.
7. Officers shall never remove the canine from the Canine Team vehicle or other area of confinement without the canine handler's knowledge and presence.

III. Use of the Canine Unit

- A. The Canine Team may be used by UPB officers for the following types of calls.
 1. Building Searches.
 - a. Officers shall immediately request a Canine Team through the 911 Dispatch if they determine that a burglary has occurred to a structure and the possibility exists that suspects may still be inside the structure.
 - b. Prior to the arrival of the Canine Team, the following steps shall be taken.
 - (1) The outside perimeter shall be secured.
 - (a) If a window has been broken or removed, officers shall relay this information to the responding Canine Team.
 - (b) It may be necessary to obtain a key to enter the building safely.
 - (2) When possible, take up positions around the building, but not next to it. Officers shall use cover and concealment to their full advantage.
 - (3) Attempt to close any opened doors or windows before the arrival of the Canine Team. This shall help to contain available scent, as well as to contain the canine during the search.
 - (4) No one shall enter the building before the Canine Team arrives.
 - (5) Advise the responding Canine Team of the perimeter positions and descriptions of any plain-clothes officers on the scene.
 - c. After a tactical approach to the building is conducted, the canine handler, if feasible and tactically safe to do so, shall give multiple announcements containing three parts prior to deploying a canine: Identify themselves as an Omaha Police Officer with the Canine Unit, give directions what actions should be taken, and advise that a canine shall be deployed which may result in a physical apprehension.

- d. If the canine alerts to a suspect(s) or is involved in a bite situation within the building, officers shall not leave the canine handler unless they are instructed to do so.
 - (1) Tactics shall be considered as officers work their way to the location of the alert or the apprehension.
 - (2) Officers shall not move ahead without first clearing each room.
- e. If an apprehension has taken place, officers shall not interfere with the commands of the canine handler and shall not come in contact with the suspect or canine until told to do so by the canine handler.
- f. The back-up officer's job is to assist the canine handler in making the area safe to approach.
 - (1) When searching a building, the canine handler is constantly watching their canine and is not watching the surrounding area.
 - (2) It is the back-up officer's responsibility to cover the canine handler during a search of this nature. The officer's attention shall be on the entire surrounding area and not focused on the canine and the suspect.

2. Tracking.

- a. Tracking of a suspect or suspects when physical presence has been recent may be a useful application of a Canine Team.
- b. When a Canine Team is requested for tracking, the below-listed procedures shall be followed for the maximum effectiveness and safety of the canine tracking the suspect.
 - (1) Canines may track on the principle of crushed or disturbed ground vegetation. It is imperative that officers do not disturb the search area before the Canine Team arrives.
 - (2) Officers shall set up a perimeter, when possible. Officers shall maintain visual contact of their assigned areas from vehicles or buildings.
 - (3) If persons are available who know the last location of the suspect(s), officers shall have them stand by to speak with the arriving canine handler so that an accurate starting point may be established.
 - (4) One or more back-up officers may be used to assist in the search.
 - (a) Officers assigned as back-up officers shall stay with the Canine Team as directed by the canine handler.
 - i. If the canine handler stops, back-up officers shall stop and wait for the Canine Team to continue the track.
 - ii. If it becomes necessary for a back-up officer to stop while the Canine Team is tracking, they shall advise the canine handler immediately.

- (b) Back-up officers shall be on the alert for movement and suspect(s) hidden in the area. It is not necessary for the back-up officers to watch the canine.
 - (5) Normally, a tracking line may be attached to the canine during this type of deployment. The canine may actually be right on top of the suspect before an officer knows the suspect is there.
- 3. Area Searches.
 - a. A Canine Team may be used in an area search mode, called the "patrol route," within a contained outside area.
 - b. Criteria to be considered before requesting a Canine Team Area Search.
 - (1) During an area search, as in a building, the canine is using the nose to locate a human scent cone. Officers shall consider weather and other environmental factors before requesting the Canine Team.
 - (2) The canine handler must know a suspected area in which to search.
 - c. Area Search Procedures.
 - (1) A perimeter shall be secured in the same manner as a tracking situation.
 - (2) The canine handler, if feasible and tactically safe to do so, shall give multiple announcements containing three parts prior to deploying a canine: Identify themselves as an Omaha Police Officer with the Canine Unit, give directions what actions should be taken, and advise that a canine shall be deployed which may result in a physical apprehension.
 - (3) The canine shall be directed to search by the canine handler or shall be escorted on a patrol route to assist in locating the scent cone of a suspect. The wind direction shall be an important factor.
 - (4) As in a tracking situation, all back-up officers shall be aware of movement in and around the search area.
 - (5) The canine handler shall watch the canine to see if the canine makes an alert.
 - (6) If the canine alerts to a suspect(s) or is involved in a bite situation, officers shall not leave the canine handler unless they are instructed to do so.
 - (a) Tactics shall be considered as officers work their way to the location of the alert or apprehension. During an area search with limited concealment and cover, officers may become very vulnerable.
 - (7) If an apprehension is taking place, officers shall not interfere with the commands of the canine handler and shall not come in contact with the suspect or canine until told to do so by the canine handler.
- 4. Criminal Apprehensions by Canine.

- a. The below-listed procedures shall be followed for maximum effectiveness and safety during canine criminal apprehensions.
 - (1) When determining whether or not to deploy a canine for criminal apprehensions, the canine handler shall take the totality of the circumstances into account. In particular, the canine handler shall consider the Graham Factors when deploying a Police Service Dog:
 - (a) The severity of the crime that the suspect is wanted for.
 - (b) Whether the suspect presents a potential threat to the safety of officers or others.
 - (c) Whether the suspect is actively resisting arrest or attempting to escape by fleeing or hiding from officers.
 - (2) The canine handler, if feasible and tactically safe to do so, shall give multiple announcements containing three parts prior to deploying a canine: Identify themselves as an Omaha Police Officer with the Canine Unit, give directions what actions should be taken, and advise that a canine shall be deployed which may result in a physical apprehension.
 - (3) The canine handler shall not send the canine to apprehend a suspect if it is known that the suspect is being directly pursued by a police officer on foot.
 - (4) The canine handler or back-up officer, upon releasing the canine, shall advise 911 Dispatch that the canine has been deployed.
 - (5) All officers in the area, except the canine handler, shall **STAND STILL WHEN THE CANINE HAS BEEN DEPLOYED ON AN APPREHENSION.**
 - (a) Back-up officers in the area of a canine apprehension are very vulnerable. If an officer is moving, they shall **STAND STILL** and wait for instructions from the canine handler.
 - (6) Contact by the canine may be unavoidable if an officer is moving. If an officer is bitten by a canine, the officer shall stop moving, and the canine handler shall immediately call off the canine.

NOTE: Officers shall not attempt to fight the canine or pull away. After the canine has been released, officers shall not make any sudden movements and shall follow all instructions of the canine handler.

5. Evidence Searches.

- a. The below-listed procedures shall be followed for maximum effectiveness and safety during evidence searches by the Canine Team.
 - (1) It is extremely important that the area to be searched is not disturbed.

NOTE: Officers shall not contaminate the area prior to the canine search.
 - (2) The decision to search on- or off-leash shall be made by the canine handler.

- (3) In order to locate evidence left or dropped from the crime scene and any personal items lost by the suspect, the canine handler must have a general idea where to search.
- (4) Officers shall follow the procedures for Canine Vehicle Searches or Canine Building Searches, as appropriate, described in this policy.

6. Narcotics Detection.

- a. The use of the Canine Team in narcotics detection is a valuable tool in drug enforcement. The canine's ability to alert and/or indicate to the odor of narcotics is directly related to the availability of the scent. The below-listed procedures shall be followed for maximum effectiveness and safety during narcotics detection or evidence searches by the Canine Team.
- b. Canines used to search for controlled substances in vehicles, residences, buildings, and suspected areas are available on an "on call" basis.
- c. Officers who require the assistance of a canine to search for controlled substances shall:
 - (1) Possess a search warrant, consent to search form, or articulated reasonable suspicion prior to requesting a Canine Team.
 - (2) Contact 911 Dispatch and request the assistance of an on-duty, narcotics Canine Team.
 - (a) If an on-duty, narcotics Canine Team is not available, 911 Dispatch may contact outside law enforcement agencies for an on-duty narcotics canine.
 - (b) If no on-duty narcotics canines can be located, 911 Dispatch shall contact the OPD Canine Unit sergeant via phone to request a narcotics Canine Team.
 - i. The Canine Unit sergeant shall contact the requesting officer(s) to determine if the situation requires the call-out of an off-duty, narcotics Canine Team.
 - ii. The Canine Unit sergeant shall contact an off-duty, OPD narcotics Canine Team to respond when appropriate.
 - (3) When requesting the Canine Team for use in exterior sniffs of vehicles that are suspected to contain illegal drugs, officers shall follow the procedures for Canine Vehicle sniffs as described in this policy.
 - (a) Vehicle sniffs shall normally only be conducted for large quantities of narcotics that are believed to be hidden in sealed compartments.
 - (4) When the canine is used for narcotics detection in a building or structure, officers shall follow the procedures for Canine Building sniffs described in this policy.
- d. Upon arrival at the scene, the requesting officer shall brief the canine handler on the:

- (1) Need for the canine.
 - (2) Search procedures conducted prior to the arrival of the canine handler.
 - (3) Areas they wish to have sniffed by the canine.
- e. The canine handler shall request that officers secure the area and direct where all suspects, observers, and other officers shall be located in relation to the immediate area prior to sniffing the vehicle, residence, building, or property for suspected controlled substances.
 - f. At the completion of the sniff, the canine handler shall advise the requesting officer of the canine's action. During any search, the canine handler shall advise the requesting officer of any items located and return the scene over to the requesting officer.
 - g. It is the responsibility of the requesting officer to determine if they shall make an arrest based on the evidence that is recovered and to take persons and/or evidence into custody.
 - h. Canine handlers shall NOT be responsible for turning in evidence recovered from a requested search or the processing of arrestees when assisting other units.

7. Canine Vehicle Sniffs.

- a. The canine handler shall be responsible for making certain that the narcotics detection is initiated at a safe location. No detection operations shall occur when the canine handler has deemed the area unsafe.
- b. It is the responsibility of the requesting officer and back-up officers to maintain observation of the operator or any occupants. The canine handler must pay a great deal of attention to the canine during a narcotics search.
- c. If the interior is to be entered by the canine, the requesting officer shall first take custody of any narcotics or paraphernalia in plain view. All occupants and food shall be removed.

8. Canine Building Sniffs.

- a. The requesting officer shall conduct a search of the area with the canine handler.
 - (1) This search shall be conducted without the canine to take into custody any narcotics or paraphernalia in view.
- b. The canine handler shall make certain of a safe working environment for the canine.
 - (1) If the canine handler has deemed the area unsafe, the canine shall not be used for a detection operation.
- c. All persons on the premises shall be removed or placed in one area prior to beginning the narcotics search.

EXCEPTION: In the event of a consent search, the owner or the owner's representative shall be permitted inside the structure.

- d. It is the responsibility of the requesting officer or back-up officer to maintain observation of the owner or representative. The canine handler must pay a great deal of attention to the canine during a narcotics search.
9. Locating lost persons or searching for victims of natural disasters. Deployments of this nature shall only be done with the approval of the Canine Unit Supervisor.

IV. Canine Use of Force Investigations

A. Reporting Requirements.

1. Canine use of force incidents shall be documented on a Chief's Report ([OPD Form 214](#)). If the result of the use of force results in injury to a suspect, an Injury Incident Report shall be completed by the canine handler. A Supplementary Report ([OPD Form 200](#)) may also be utilized.
2. When a request to investigate a canine use of force incident is received, the Canine Unit sergeant shall respond if available. If not, the area sergeant where the incident occurred or next available command officer shall respond. If the incident is outside the jurisdiction of the OPD, a command officer from OPD must respond. The responding command officer shall:
 - a. Make certain the suspect is transported to the hospital for treatment, regardless of their wishes.
 - b. Make certain the Forensic Investigations Unit is contacted and request photos of the bite wounds after medical attention has been provided.
 - (1) It is important to document not only the location of injuries or bites, but also the absence of injuries or bites.

EXAMPLE: If the suspect was bitten on the leg, have photos taken of the suspect's torso with shirt removed (if male), or both arms and abdomen (if female) to show the absence of injuries or bites in these areas.

NOTE: If the suspect refuses to cooperate, the refusal shall be documented, and only non-intrusive photos shall be taken.
 - c. Make certain the originating officer books or cites the suspect for the proper charges and completes the appropriate PortalONE Incident Report.
 - d. Ensure the Canine Unit Supervisor is aware of the apprehension.
 - e. Conduct a post bite interview of the suspect(s) and/or involved party(ies) and complete the Canine Post Bite Suspect / Involved Party Interview form ([OPD Form 130B](#)), if applicable, and ensure witness officers complete the Canine Post Bite Officer Witness form ([OPD Form 130A](#)).
 - f. Forward all reports and any additional information to the Canine Unit sergeant.
3. The Canine Unit sergeant shall be responsible to ensure the Canine Officer completes the following reports:
 - a. Supplementary Report ([OPD Form 200](#)).

- b. Chief's Report ([OPD Form 214](#)).
 - c. Incident- Injury Report ([OPD Form 189](#)).
 - d. External Wound Location Chart ([OPD Form 3](#)).
- (1) The Canine Unit sergeant shall be responsible for reviewing the use of force, completing the "Supervisor" section of the Chief's Report, and completing the overall synopsis determining whether the bite was a reasonable use of force.
 - (2) The Canine Unit sergeant shall forward the required reports to the Safety Review Committee via chain of command.

B. Interviewing Witnesses, Suspects, Involved Parties, and Officers.

- 1. When interviewing witnesses to the canine use of force incident, the investigating command officer shall utilize the Canine Post Bite Officer Witness form ([OPD Form 130A](#)) and is intended for law enforcement officers. The canine handler shall document their actions in a Chief's Report ([OPD Form 214](#)) and do not need to complete a Canine Post Bite Officer Witness form. The Canine Post Bite Officer Witness form shall remain with the Chief's Report packet. If either the sergeant or the officer being interviewed believe that the officer may become the target of an IA investigation which could lead to discipline against the officer, the interview should be terminated.
- 2. When interviewing a suspect(s) or involved party(ies) who were subjected to a canine use of force, inform them the intent of the questioning is only to investigate the use of the canine, and that nothing they say shall be used in a criminal investigation. The investigating command officer shall utilize the Canine Post Bite Suspect/Involved Party Interview form ([OPD Form 130B](#)). The form shall be forwarded to the Canine Unit sergeant. This form shall remain with the Chief's Report packet.
 - a. If it is anticipated that the Criminal Investigations Bureau (CIB) shall question the suspect, DO NOT question the suspect.
 - b. If the suspect may face misdemeanor charges only, and/or CIB interviews are not anticipated, the investigating command officer may question the suspect.

V. Public Appearances

- A. The OPD has received requests from members of civic organizations requesting that canines be allowed to make public appearances and give demonstrations.
- B. These requests shall be reviewed, and the decision to allow canines to be used during a presentation or public appearance shall be at the discretion of the Canine Unit sergeant.

REFERENCES:

I. Previous OPD Orders

- A. Previous General Orders: #32-89, 34-90, 52-96, 30-03, 25-07, 31-11, 34-14, 9-16, 26-20, and 71-24.

II. Court Cases

- A. [Graham v. Connor, 490 U.S. 386 \(1989\)](#) (Graham Factors).

III. CALEA Accreditation Standards

A. Relevant CALEA Accreditation Standards: 4.2.1 and 41.1.5.

IV. Other

A. PPM Monthly Updates: #06-2015, 06-2018, and 09-2019.