



Seattle Police Department Policy Manual



Interim Policy 16.300 – Canines

Effective Date: 04/24/2023

The purpose of this policy is to regulate the use of Seattle Police canines. It sets out the duties and responsibilities of supervisors and canine handlers for use, approval, and deployment of department canines. The use of canines requires adherence to procedures that control their use of force potential and that direct their specialized capabilities into legally acceptable crime detection, prevention, and control activities.

1. Definitions

The following terms apply to this policy and are defined in manual section [Interim Policy 8.050 – Use of Force Definitions](#):

- Canine Apprehension
- Canine Bite
- Canine Deployment
- Canine Handler or Canine Officer
- Canine Search
- Canine Team
- Canine Use of Force
- Confirmation Track
- Contained Search
- Containment
- Direct Apprehension
- Non-Tactical Use of Canine
- Off-Lead
- On-Lead
- Surrender
- Unintentional Canine Bite or Injury

2. The Following Units Have Operational Control of Canine Teams:

- The Canine Unit has sole responsibility for Patrol Canine Teams.
- The Arson/Bomb Squad (ABS) has sole responsibility for Explosive Detection Canine Teams.
- The Narcotics Unit has sole responsibility for Narcotic Detection Canine Teams.

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

- The Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Unit has sole responsibility for the Electronic Detection Canine Teams.
- The Sexual Assault Unit (SAU) has sole responsibility for victim's assistance canines.
- The Wellness Unit has sole responsibility for Facility Canine Teams.

While the above units have sole responsibility for their Canine Teams, the Patrol Canine Training Sergeant is responsible for auditing deployments and training for all Canine Teams from every unit on an annual basis to ensure compliance with law, policy, and best practices.

Units supervising Canine Teams will provide the Patrol Canine Training Sergeant access to the Canine Teams and their records.

3. The Canine Unit Will Maintain a Unit Manual

The Canine Unit Manual is designed to ensure that the canine teams are trained to the point at which the handler can demonstrate total control over the canine's activities.

4. A Police Canine is Primarily a Locating Tool

Using its extraordinary olfactory skills, a canine may aid officers in locating subjects or evidence. Officers must adhere to all applicable laws and department policy.

When a canine is used to physically apprehend a suspect, it is an instrumentality of force and will only be used consistent with all applicable laws and department policy.

Exception: Facility Canine Teams will be used for Officer Wellness Activities.

(See manual section [Interim Policy 8.300-POL-2](#) Use of Patrol Canines for guidance)

5. Sergeants Supervising Canine Teams Will Have Significant Knowledge About Police Canine Operations

6. All Department Canines Will be Deployed in a Manner That Complies with All Applicable Laws and Department Policy

Canine teams will be trained and will demonstrate proficiency such that the handler has control over the canine's activities.

Canine teams must complete annual testing requirements.

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

Canine Teams must adhere to training, testing, and certification requirements as outlined by The Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission (WSCJTC).

Canine Teams will complete a minimum of sixteen (16) hours of training per discipline each month.

Canine Team Supervisors will review all canine training, deployments, applications, and documentation monthly.

16.300-POL-1 Guidelines for the Use of Canines

Police Canines are a multi-functional asset that may be used in appropriate circumstances to assist officers in the search for criminal suspects, narcotics, explosives, or evidence.

The use of canines by the Seattle Police Department requires adherence to procedures that properly control their use of force potential and that channel their specialized capabilities into legally acceptable activities.

1. Non-Tactical Use of Canine

Canines may be deployed in non-aggressive work such as:

- Searching for evidence, narcotics, explosives, contraband; or
- Officers may use a trained detection canine in accordance with department search and seizure policy and current search and seizure laws.
- Victim's assistance through the SAU or Wellness Units.

2. A Canine Officer Will Be Available for Call-Out Under Conditions Specified by the Canine Unit

Department personnel may request the use of a canine.

3. Canine Deployments Will Be Limited to the Following Situations Where Probable Cause, or a Valid Arrest Warrant Exists for Any of the Below Listed Crimes:

Felony Crimes:

- Burglary 1st degree, Residential Burglary, and Burglary 2nd degree (except when the burglary offense is the result of a trespass admonishment)
- Robbery 1st degree and Robbery 2nd degree

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

- Murder 1st degree, Murder 2nd degree, Homicide by abuse, Manslaughter 1st degree, and Manslaughter 2nd degree
- Assault 1st degree, Assault 2nd degree, and Assault 3rd degree
- Kidnapping 1st degree and Kidnapping 2nd Degree
- Arson 1st degree and Arson 2nd degree
- Felony Harassment against police
- Domestic violence felony crimes as defined in [RCW 10.99.020](#)

Examples include:

- Assault 1st degree ([RCW 9A.36.011](#));
 - Assault 2nd degree ([RCW 9A.36.021](#));
 - Assault 3rd degree ([RCW 9A.36.031](#));
 - Drive-by shooting ([RCW 9A.36.045](#));
 - Burglary 1st degree ([RCW 9A.52.020](#));
 - Residential Burglary ([RCW 9A.52.025](#));
 - Burglary 2nd degree ([RCW 9A.52.030](#));
 - Malicious Mischief 1st degree ([RCW 9A.48.070](#));
 - Malicious Mischief 2nd degree ([RCW 9A.48.080](#));
 - Kidnapping 1st degree ([RCW 9A.40.020](#));
 - Kidnapping 2nd degree ([RCW 9A.40.030](#));
 - Unlawful Imprisonment ([RCW 9A.40.040](#));
 - Rape 1st degree ([RCW 9A.44.040](#)); and
 - Rape 2nd degree ([RCW 9A.44.050](#)).
- Sexual assault
 - Felony Hit and Run ([RCW 46.52.020](#)),
 - Vehicular Assault ([RCW 46.51.522](#)),
 - Vehicular Homicide ([RCW 46.61.520](#)),

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

- Rape, Rape of a Child, Child Molestation, and Indecent Liberties; and
- Drive by shootings.

Misdemeanor Crimes:

- Domestic Violence Assault
- Domestic Violence Order Violations that are subject to mandatory arrest—violations will involve the subject's physical presence at the victim's location or a threat of harm

Approval by a supervisor is needed for all other crimes where there is a reasonable belief that the subject is armed with a firearm or weapon capable of causing substantial bodily harm, great bodily harm, or death; or the subject poses an imminent threat of harm to the public.

Exception: Canine handlers may deploy their canine to protect officers or the public from when a subject causes an imminent threat of harm to any person.

4. Canine Deployments are Prohibited for the Following:

- Administrative warrants, e.g. Department of Corrections warrants, absent a new offense as outlined in 16.300-POL-1(3).
- To apprehend anyone suspected to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol or who appears to be in behavioral crisis absent an offense as outlined in 16.300-POL-1(3).
- Demonstrations, crowd management, or civil disturbances.

5. Canines Will Not Be Used to Apprehend Subjects Perceived to Be Juveniles Except for the Crimes Listed in 16.300-POL-1(3)

In the case of known or possible juvenile subjects, special consideration will be given to the subject's age and propensity for violence, and officers will explore alternatives to the deployment of a canine.

6. Canine Handlers Will Obtain a Briefing of the Incident Prior to Deploying Their Canine

Canine officers may gather information from on-scene officers in-person, by phone or via police radio or MDT while enroute to the call.

A briefing will include, if applicable:

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

- A description of the facts and circumstances that establish probable cause to apprehend the subject or reasonable suspicion to detain the subject;
- A detailed description of the wanted subject, if available;
- The subject's actual or perceived age (i.e., whether the subject is or may be a juvenile). The subject's perceived age will be determined by gathering as much information as possible from officers and/or witnesses who observed the subject's physical characteristics (height, weight, etc.);
- Behavior or information indicating whether the subject poses imminent threat or violence to others;
- The severity of the crime;
- Whether the subject is known or believed to be armed;
- Whether there is reason to believe the subject may not speak or understand English or may have a hearing impairment;
- Known potential danger to the public and/or other officers at the scene if the canine is released;
- The degree of resistance or threatened resistance communicated or shown by the subject;
- The potential for escape or flight if the canine is not utilized;
- The level of pedestrian foot traffic; and
- Whether the area perimeter is contained.

Canine officers will coordinate with on-scene officers and develop a plan as to how they will safely track (i.e., cover officer, shutting down vehicle traffic, etc.) as well as an arrest plan if a subject is located unless exigent circumstances exist.

7. Canine Deployment Announcements for Canine Searches

Prior to deploying a canine, a verbal announcement will be made and repeated attempts to notify persons within the area with the intent to utilize a canine team and to afford subjects the opportunity to surrender to the police.

The announcement will say that there are police officers in the area and that a trained police canine will be released and may bite individuals who do not surrender.

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

Exception: A verbal announcement is not required if giving the warning would compromise the safety of the canine officer or others. In such circumstances, the canine officer will document their reason(s) for believing their safety would have been compromised in their use of force statement and or canine deployment record.

- When feasible, the announcement will be given by patrol car PA system or amplified by other means.
- The announcement will be clear, loud, and audible to all individuals who may be affected by the operation. Where there is a reasonable belief that the subject speaks a language other than English, an officer or other individual fluent in that language will be summoned to the scene if available and the exigency of the situation permits.
- A reasonable amount of time will be allowed between announcement and deployment for the subject to respond and others to seek safety.
- Officers assigned to containment will confirm hearing the canine announcements prior to initiating a search.
- A verbal warning will be repeated as the search proceeds and the canine team reaches a different floor, or parts of the building or other area where the initial announcement may not have been heard.
- If feasible, other officers will be in a location opposite from where the announcements are made to verify that it can be heard.

8. Off-Lead Canine Searches May be Suitable Under Certain Circumstances

To optimize officers' ability to effectively leverage time, distance, angles, and shielding, off-lead Canine Search may be appropriate when:

- Searching large structures where staffing commitments and search time will be extensive.
- Searching for suspects believed to be armed with a firearm or other potentially deadly weapon;
- Searching for suspects hiding inside a building or structure, in a confined or hazardous-to-access space (e.g., attics, basements, or interior crawl spaces);
- Traversing large, open, spaces; or contending with high-ground, presents significant added risk to officers;

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

- The environment presents a tangling hazard which would require the handler or other officers to shorten distance between themselves and the dog, constrain the angles from which they approach unknown territory, or enter open and uncontrolled space to free the dog from a tangle. Examples of such environments would be dense brush, buildings with open stud framing (remodeling or new construction), or cluttered spaces.

Canine searches of residences are discouraged whenever there is risk of a bite to innocent persons. Before conducting a search of a residence, the handler will make every effort to ensure the safety of any residents that might be present.

Residential searches will be conducted on a lead unless the handler can determine that there are no residents at home. This can be done through contacts with victims, witnesses, neighbors, responsible parties, and officers on the scene.

The presence of uncontained animals in a residence to be searched will normally preclude the use of canines unless the animals can be removed or contained. In cases where it can be done safely, an on-lead search can be done in the presence of uncontained animals.

9. A Canine Team is Viewed as a Single Officer Unit and Will Perform Under that Premise When Making Decisions Regarding Contact of Subjects. A Canine Handler May Use a Canine for Officer Safety

Use of a canine may be reasonable to provide additional safety for officers when needed.

The canine will not be used solely for intimidation or coercion.

10. Canine Officers May Use Direct Apprehension to Physically Apprehend a Subject

For additional guidance on direct apprehensions, see manual section [Interim Policy 8.300-POL-2 Use of Patrol Canines](#).

11. When Safe and Feasible, Canine Handlers Will Make All Reasonable Efforts to Keep the Police Canine in Sight

Canine handlers will remain within a working distance of their police dog to ensure they can read their canine's body language and that the police canine obeys verbal commands.

12. Whenever a Canine is Deployed, Whether Force is Used or Not, the Canine Handler Will Document the Deployment

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

Canine deployment records are maintained by the Canine Unit.

13. An Unintentional Canine Bite or Injury is Not a Use of Force, But it Will be Reported Separately per 16.300-PRO-1 Unintentional Canine Bite or Injury

In the event of an unintentional canine bite or injury, canine handlers will follow unintentional injury procedures, not use-of-force reporting procedures. A supervisor will screen the incident with FIT.

16.300-POL-2 Canine Training

1. Canine Teams Will Train Regularly and Certify as Required by Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 139-05-915

No handler is permitted to train the police canine in methods, techniques, or activities contrary to the accepted methods used by the canine units.

Strict handler control is the overriding goal of Patrol Canine Teams. A Patrol Canine handler must be able to cause the canine to follow the handler's orders.

- When the police canine is on-lead and off-lead;
- When the police canine is ordered to release a bite;
- When the police canine is ordered to bite; and
- For the police canine to stay and guard without a bite.

Handlers who are not capable of demonstrating such control will not be active in the field until the situation is rectified.

2. Disbanding and Decertification of a Canine Team

Disbanding of a canine team can occur at the requested separation of a canine team by the WSCJTC.

Decertification of the canine team refers to the processes outlined in [RCW 43.101.105](#) for the denial, suspension, or revocation of peace and corrections officer certification.

16.300-POL-3 Assignment of Canines

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

1. Canine Teams Will be Assigned to Their Corresponding Bureau and Used to Aid and Assist All Personnel of the Seattle Police Department

2. Canine Teams Will Function Primarily as Support Units

Canine officers should not be assigned to handle matters that will take them out of service for extended periods of time unless approved by their canine supervisor.

3. Canine Teams are Viewed as a Single Officer Units and Should Perform Under That Premise When Making Decisions Regarding Contact of Suspects

16.300-POL-4 Requests for Public Demonstrations

1. All Canine Demonstrations Will be Approved by the Canine Team's Unit Supervisor.

Canine demonstrations, when authorized, will follow this policy and the unit manual.

16.300-POL-5 Canines in Public Areas

1. Canine Handlers Will Maintain Control Over their Canines in Public Areas at All Times

When not specifically deployed, all canines will be kept on leashes when in areas that allow access to the public.

Exception: This does not apply to training, approved demonstrations, or SPD secure facilities.

2. When the Canine Unit is Left Unattended in a Vehicle, The Vehicle Will Be Secured in Such a Manner as to Prevent Unauthorized Access to the Canine

16.300-POL-6 Use of Non-SPD Canines

1. Use of Non-SPD Canine Resources

No dog belonging to an individual, agency, or group other than the Seattle Police Department will be used for the purpose of assisting the department, except when:

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

- There are no available on-duty SPD Canine Teams for that area of specialization, and
 - Absent immediate life safety, the Communications Center (CSCC) has initiated and received no response for a standby canine unit, and
- The City of Seattle Communications Center (CSCC) has:
 - Notified a Canine Unit Supervisor, or
 - Notified the Commander of the Seattle Police Operations Center (SPOC) during an activation of the SPOC, or
- The handler and dog are members of a law enforcement agency which has a reciprocal agreement with the department, or
- The handler and dog are members of the Federal Emergency Management Agency Urban Search and Rescue Team being used during a disaster, or
- Agreements are entered into by the Chief of the Seattle Police Department for specific units on a case-by-case basis. Those units will follow the agreements reached.

2. Approval and Authority

Under no circumstances will use of a dog and handler be approved when the SPD Canine Officer at the scene decides the use of the dog is inappropriate, falls outside of law, and/or SPD policy.

Authority for continued use, different application, or termination of the activity may be made by a supervisor of the Wellness Unit, Canine Unit, ABS Unit, Commander of the Special Services Section, Patrol Incident Commander or, during a SPOC activation the Commander of the Seattle Police Operations Center.

16.300-PRO-1 Unintentional Canine Bite or Injury

In the event of an unintentional canine bite or injury, the:

Canine Handler

1. **Requests** medical aid for the injured subject.
2. **Renders** first aid within the handler's training.
3. **Calls** a supervisor to the scene.

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

4. **Notifies** the canine sergeant if not on scene.

The Responding Supervisor

5. **Takes** photos of the injury.
6. **Gathers** witness information, if available.

Canine Handler

7. **Prepares** a Blue Team and routes through the Chain of Command.

Canine Sergeant

8. **Conducts** an investigation of the incident to determine if a change in procedure or additional training is needed.
9. **Screens** the incident with FIT.

Canine Lieutenant

10. **Reviews** the incident and ensures the investigation is complete and there are no policy violations.

Canine Captain

11. **Reviews** the incident with the Canine Unit sergeant and lieutenant.
12. **Forwards** the report and Accidental Injury Memorandum and any findings to Special Operations' Bureau Chief.

Canine Handler

13. **Closely observes** the canine for ten days immediately following the incident.
14. If the canine officer observes the canine exhibiting any abnormal behavior during the ten-day period, the canine officer will **take** the canine to the veterinarian for an examination.

Administration

15. All accidental bites will result in the canine being removed from active service until the chain of command and the canine

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

trainer have **reviewed** the incident, remedial training has been conducted (if warranted), and the canine responded to training.