

312 POLICE CANINE TEAMS

- I. PURPOSE: To establish guidelines for the utilization, operation, training, and supervision of police canine (K-9) teams.
- II. DISCUSSION: The primary goal of the K-9 Unit is to enhance the police department's objectives in providing quality law enforcement service to the community. Police K-9 teams are valuable tools in accomplishing law enforcement objectives of criminal apprehension and search and seizure. Furthermore, the police K-9 have an important role concerning officer safety in hazardous field situations.
- III. DEFINITIONS:
 - A. Canine (K-9): A working-class dog which has been procured and specially trained to execute a number of specific tasks which make use of its acute senses, agility, and speed.
 - B. Canine (K-9) Officer: A police officer specially trained in the care, handling, and training of a K-9 for law enforcement use.
 - C. Canine (K-9) Team: The terminology used to refer to a K-9 officer functioning with his assigned K-9.
 - D. EOD Detector K-9: A specially trained K-9 used to search for explosive ordinances or devices.
 - E. Narcotic Detector K-9: A specially trained K-9 used to search for specific narcotics.
 - F. Animal Assisted Therapy K-9: A specially trained K-9 used to promote social interactions, reduce anxiety, and comfort people who have experienced a critical or traumatic event.
- IV. ORGANIZATION:
 - A. The Tampa Police Department K-9 Unit shall be supervised by a police sergeant and shall be an organizational unit of the Special Operations Division, with citywide responsibilities.
 - B. Master Trainer: A member of the K-9 unit for a minimum of five (5) years. An active C.J.S.T.C. certified K-9 instructor. Has trained or assisted in training at least five (5) K-9 teams to pass F.D.L.E. certification standards.
 - C. K-9 Unit Assistant Trainer: Any handler, designated by the K-9 Unit Sergeant, who is assisting with training or designed to train a specific block of instruction. This will assist with building continuity and succession within the K-9 Unit training program.
 1. Assist the K-9 Unit Master Trainers with their training duties.

2. Carry out all duties of a K-9 handler.

V. HANDLER SELECTION CRITERIA:

A. Qualifications: Members of the K-9 Unit must meet the following qualifications:

1. Minimum of 2 years of experience with the Tampa Police Department.
2. Successfully pass the Physical Assessment Test.
3. Be willing to remain in the K-9 Unit for a minimum of 4 years. (Exceptions will be made upon promotion or administrative transfer.)
4. Have a residence secured by a 6-foot fence that allocates to the requirements for safely housing a Police K-9.
5. Capable of independent work with minimal supervision.
6. Flexible to regular shift changes and work hours as required by the needs of the department.
7. Comfortable and effective at public speaking.

B. Application Process for the Position of K-9 Handler:

1. Upon the notice of a K-9 Tryout, applicants will author a letter of interest, through their chain of command, detailing their interest and qualifications. An electronic copy will be sent in advance to the K-9 Unit Sergeant and SOD Lieutenant over the K-9 Unit. The K-9 Unit Sergeant will conduct a background check on each applicant to include:
 - a. Interviewing current and former supervisors.
 - b. Review the applicant's personnel file.
 - c. Review the applicant's disciplinary records.

C. Testing:

1. Each applicant will sit for an oral board interview conducted by the K-9 Unit Supervisors and others designated by the K-9 Sergeant.
2. Each applicant will participate in a two-day structured assessment, where they will be evaluated by current members of the K-9 Unit as they are tested on critical thinking skills, Standard Operating Procedure application, scenario-based exercises, physical fitness, and applicant/K-9 interaction.

D. Candidates Eligible for Selection to the K-9 Unit:

1. Based upon the performance evaluation results during the two-day assessment, each applicant will be reviewed by the K-9 Unit supervisors to be designated as eligible candidates for selection to the K-9 Unit.
2. Each eligible candidate will be given the opportunity to attend K-9 Unit common training dates, as approved by their current supervisors. This will

continue the exposure to the K-9 operations and facilitate the continued assessment process.

VI. LAW ENFORCEMENT K-9 APPLICATIONS:

A. Tracking Operations:

1. All area searches will be conducted on-lead unless the search area is completely surrounded by a restrictive barrier, e.g., a fence or an open area of sufficient size to reasonably ensure that the K-9 will not encounter citizens or perimeter units.

B. Building Searches:

1. K-9 teams will be utilized to search structures believed burglarized and structures utilized by a felony suspect to escape police apprehension.
2. Utilizing the K-9 team to search a structure minimizes the probability of an officer being injured. Patrol units will not search a structure if a K-9 team is responding. An officer may inadvertently contaminate the suspect's scent making it more difficult to use the K-9 for tracking. Prior to utilizing a K-9 team for a structural search, patrols units will secure the perimeter of the building.
3. The K-9 officer must be reasonably certain that the structure to be searched is clear of innocent persons. Prior to searching the structure for the purpose of apprehension of a suspect, the K-9 officer shall afford the violator the opportunity to surrender by giving the essence of the following verbal announcement:

“THIS IS THE TAMPA POLICE DEPARTMENT K-9 UNIT, IDENTIFY YOUR PRESENCE AND SURRENDER IMMEDIATELY OR I WILL RELEASE A TRAINED POLICE DOG TO FIND AND APPREHEND YOU.”

This announcement will be given in a loud and clear voice at the team's entry point. For searches and tracks outside of a building, the announcement will be given utilizing the police vehicle public announcement system (PA). An additional announcement will be given depending on the distance of the track compared to the original starting point. If it is believed a suspect is hiding in a known area, an additional announcement will be given prior to entering the area in order to afford the suspect an additional opportunity to surrender. The announcement is not required in situations of fresh pursuit or where a suspect reasonably believed to be armed may pose an additional threat to the officer or K-9, because of the warning.

- C. Felony Arrest: K-9 teams may be utilized to effect felony arrests and to prevent the escape of a person whom the officer reasonably believes committed a felony. The

utilization of a K-9 must be progressive force where lesser force could not reasonably accomplish the arrest.

K-9 officers must consider possible dangers prior to releasing the K-9 for a felony apprehension (bystanders, other police officers, vehicular traffic, etc.).

- D. Protection of the Officer or Other Persons: The K-9 may be utilized to protect the handler, other police officers, and other persons from injury or death.
- E. Search and Seizure: K-9 teams may be utilized to search and seize evidence when all legal requirements for such searches and seizures have been met.
- F. Special Circumstances:
 - 1. A supervisor shall consult with the K-9 officer prior to directing the tactical use of the K-9. Instances in which the capabilities of the K-9 are a significant consideration in the success of a task shall be guided by the opinion of the K-9 officer, or K-9 supervisor, if available, as to the ability of the K-9 to perform the required assignment.
 - 2. K-9 Teams may occasionally be called upon to assist in misdemeanor investigations. (Example – A specific felony crime pattern has been established in a specific area. Officers have received calls reference a suspicious person in that specific area and the suspicious person fled upon the arrival of units to the area.) The abilities of the K-9 to assist in the location of this misdemeanor suspect will greatly benefit the police in their investigation and add to protection of the citizens of Tampa. All misdemeanor searches will be approved by the K-9 supervisor or in their absence a shift commander.
 - 3. Deployment of K-9 teams for crowd control in situations of civil disorder may not be conducted without specific authority of the Chief of Police or a designee possessing at least the rank of captain.
- G. Animal Assisted Therapy K-9:
 - 1. K-9 Teams designated as Animal Assisted Therapy K-9s will be utilized for community outreach and engagement. They will also be utilized for employees or citizens that have experienced a critical or traumatic event.

VII. OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES:

- A. Deployment:
 - 1. K-9 teams shall be deployed at specific times and locations that provide optimal and uniform response throughout the city.
 - 2. K-9 teams shall, while on duty, respond to all felony crimes in-progress within their assigned areas without specific dispatch, and shall assist patrol

units in potentially violent situations.

- a. As a general rule, K-9 teams should not be assigned as a primary unit to investigatory calls unless so authorized by a K-9 supervisor or shift commander.
 - b. Dispatch to particular in-progress calls should be made in conjunction with the zone or area unit(s).
 - c. E.O.D. K-9 units may be deployed to search nonspecific threats such as special events when deployment is for pre-emptive security measures. These searches require the presence of an E.O.D. technician. An E.O.D. K-9 unit may also be deployed at the request of the E.O.D. commander or any E.O.D. technician.
 - d. All EOD sweeps will be conducted utilizing the six-foot lead for the K-9.
 - e. E.O.D. technician(s) will be dispatched in conjunction with all E.O.D. K-9 calls for assistance outside of the city limits of Tampa.
 - f. The Communications Bureau supervisor shall notify the E.O.D. commander and the K-9 supervisor of any requests for an E.O.D. K-9.
 - g. The K-9 supervisor shall determine which E.O.D. K-9 is to be dispatched to any E.O.D. call or request.
 - h. Nothing in this section is to prohibit an E.O.D. technician from accompanying any E.O.D. K-9 team while conducting a search, whether a specific threat or a sweep for pre-emptive security measures.
3. Requests for assistance from outside agencies shall be forwarded to the K-9 supervisor. Emergency requests shall be forwarded to a district shift commander in the absence of the K-9 supervisor.
- B. Responsibilities of K-9 Officers: K-9 officers shall be responsible for adhering to the practices and procedures documented in the duties and responsibilities procedures for K-9 officers and handlers and other protocol. Handlers will at all times be responsible for the actions of their assigned canines.
- C. Duties of Responding Units: In order to achieve maximum effectiveness in utilizing K-9 teams, officers shall adhere to the following:
1. Evaluate the need for a K-9 team at the earliest possible time, and call for K-9 assistance without delay.
 2. Avoid contaminating the area to be searched.

3. If police personnel or others have entered a search area or structure prior to the K-9 team's arrival, officers shall ensure that all personnel are cleared from the area prior to the K-9 search. The nature of the scene contamination shall be described to the K-9 officer.
4. Police officers shall maintain a perimeter of any area or structure to be searched by a K-9 team. Area perimeters involving several field units shall be coordinated by a squad supervisor.
5. Officers on perimeter assignment will not enter or permit anyone to enter the search area until the search has been completed, or unless advised otherwise by the ranking officer at the scene. The K-9 handler at the scene will be notified before anyone is allowed to enter the search area.
6. Officers on the perimeter assignment who observe citizens in the area of an active search area will immediately warn the citizen of the police K-9 in the area, and request they go inside their residence or leave the area. If a citizen refuses to cooperate, the officer will immediately notify the K-9 search team of the citizen in the area and will advise their location. The K-9 search team will give acknowledgment. The officer will remain with the citizen to help ensure the safety of the citizen.
7. When a K-9 team enters a structure or search area, another officer(s) may be assigned to accompany the team, at the discretion of the K-9 officer. The officer's responsibility will be to provide cover to the K-9 team.

D. Training:

1. The F.D.L.E. State-Approved K-9 course shall be completed prior to the deployment of any new K-9 Handler.
 - a. All officers approved by the K-9 Sergeant to participate in K-9 training with the unit will wear the mandatory protective headgear and hand protection while performing any decoy training with the canines. This is to include applicants trying out for the K-9 unit.
2. K-9 teams must engage in sufficient ongoing training on a weekly basis to maintain the state standards set by F.D.L.E. They must be able to demonstrate these standards at least quarterly or at any time requested by the K-9 supervisor.
 - a. All K-9 training will be conducted only after notification is made to one of the K-9 trainers or K-9 supervisors of the unit.
 - b. Any K-9 engagement training involving officers outside of the K-9 unit will only be conducted with an approved K-9 trainer or a K-9 supervisor present. Head and hand protective equipment will be utilized.

3. The K-9 supervisor or designee shall be responsible for developing and implementing the weekly training curriculum.
 - a. A minimum of 16 hours of maintenance training a month will be conducted by each individual K-9 Team.

E. Community Engagement and Demonstrations:

1. Requests for K-9 demonstrations and exhibitions shall be forwarded to, and coordinated by, the K-9 supervisor or designee.
2. Demonstrations and exhibitions shall be limited to locations within Hillsborough County unless specifically authorized by the Special Operations Division Commander.
3. K-9 officers shall not engage in impromptu demonstrations of K-9 apprehension abilities unless individually authorized by the K-9 supervisor.
4. Designated Animal Assisted Therapy K-9s are authorized to utilize their therapy K-9 as needed, at their discretion, relating to community engagement and response to employees or citizens that have experienced critical events.

F. Certification:

1. Patrol Discipline Certification: A new K-9 Handler is required to complete the State approved 480-hour K-9 course maintained by F.D.L.E. The K-9 team will be required to show proficiency by passing the F.D.L.E. standard K-9 team certification.
 - a. A handler that has completed the State approved 480-hour K-9 course maintained by F.D.L.E., will be required to pass an 80-hour minimum course for any additional K-9 partners and show proficiency by passing the F.D.L.E. standard K-9 team certification.
2. Odor Discipline (Narcotics / Explosive Detection Certification): Each handler will complete an odor discipline school facilitated by the Tampa Police Department K-9 Unit Trainers. Certifications for Odor Detection will be achieved through the NAPWDA and/or USPCA organizations.
3. Each K-9 team will complete the certification for Patrol Discipline and Odor Detection Discipline annually. Certifications will be scheduled by a Master K-9 Trainer at the direction of the K-9 Unit Sergeant.
4. Therapy K-9 requirements and maintenance training will follow the American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen minimum standards. The disciplines that the Therapy K-9 team will maintain proficiency in will include but are not limited to the following: Accepting a friendly stranger, sitting politely for petting, appearance and grooming, walking politely on a leash, walking through a crowd, obeying a "Sit" and "Down" command on cue with the ability

to stay in place, coming back to handler when called, having no reaction to another dog, having no reaction to distraction, and supervised separation from the handler.

G. Professional Standards:

1. K-9 officers, regardless of assignment, shall immediately notify the K-9 supervisor of all K-9 bites or injuries, whether on or off-duty, regardless of the location of the incident.
2. The K-9 supervisor shall notify the affected shift commander and the K-9 chain of command of all injuries or unusual events concerning a K-9 situation.
3. The K-9 management chain of command shall evaluate the particular situation and initiate appropriate action (e.g., coordinate departmental review via the Professional Standards Bureau, cause the necessary department notifications).
4. K-9 officers shall complete their required departmental documentation (i.e., report supplement, custody memo, intra-division memorandum) concerning K-9 bite or injury prior to securing from their tour of duty.
5. The K-9 supervisor shall route a copy of all K-9 apprehensions resulting in injury caused by the K-9, to the Professional Standards Bureau.

Supersedes SOP 312, dated 2/19.