



POLICY AND PROCEDURE NO. 401

Canine Unit Guidelines

Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards:
41.1.4

Date Issued: November 5, 2025
Date Effective: November 5, 2025

9 Pages

1. PURPOSE:

To establish and define the role of the Worcester Police Department Canine Unit, establish guidelines for activation and utilization of canine resources.

2. POLICY:

The Worcester Police Canine Unit shall:

When requested and approved, assist members from the Worcester Police Department and those from other municipal, state and federal agencies. **MPAC 41.1.4**

3. GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

The purpose of this policy is to establish responsibilities and procedures pertaining to the use, deployment, training, and care of the Worcester Police Canine Unit.

The primary mission of the Canine Unit is to provide trained canine teams to assist in the prevention and detection of crime, the tracking of missing persons and persons sought by the police, the search for articles to be used for evidence and the search of areas and buildings in which a suspect is being sought. All members of the department shall cooperate and assist the Canine Unit in achieving these objectives.

Members of the Canine Unit shall participate in assisting in patrol function activities in a highly visible fashion. The Canine Unit will make themselves available to assist on all calls for which the canine is trained.

4. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Canine Unit will be assigned to Special Operations.

A Police Official will be assigned as the Canine Unit supervisor and he/she will report to the Captain of Special Operations, through his/her chain of command.

WPD will utilize a qualified trainer who can provide certified canine training. The Canine Unit Supervisor will be responsible for the day-to-day supervision, record keeping of all daily activity logs and training records. He/she will ensure that each canine team receives monthly in-service training averaging 24 hours per month absent extenuating circumstances.

The supervisor will be responsible for training requirements by the Worcester Police Canine Unit and will ensure that Department canines receive training and certification along the

requirements of the United States Police Canine Association (USPCA), the North American Police Work Dog Association (NAPWDA), the Boston Police Canine Academy, and or other recognized and reputable canine association agency prior to deployment.

The canine supervisor will be the canine liaison between the Department and outside law enforcement agencies when outside canines are needed for planned operations. In the event of an emergency any police official may request outside canines as needed.

The WPD Canine Unit Supervisor will track canine deployments and canine apprehensions. They will calculate and track canine bite ratios monthly to assess its canine unit and individual canine teams. WPD will require the review of the performance of any handler whose bite ratio exceeds 20 percent during a six-month period, or the entire unit if the unit's bite ratio exceeds that threshold.

5. HANDLERS:

Handler selection will comport with the Specialized Unit policy.

Potential Handlers must have single family dwelling with a yard suitable to provide safe care and protection of the canine. The K-9 Unit Supervisor will inspect potential handlers dwelling before the canine is issued.

Officers assigned to the canine unit, in addition to complying with the policy and procedures of WPD, have the added responsibility of kenneling, handling and caring for a trained police work dog. All new handlers will be supplied with the following equipment:

- Kennel
- Kennel flooring
- Doghouse
- New Handler Kit

All handlers should be aware of all criminal, and civil, actions which could result from carelessness in the event their dog bites an innocent person while off duty.

All handlers are to ensure that the general health, hygiene, and care of their assigned canine is maintained. Should circumstances change the canine supervisor should be notified as soon as possible.

All handlers shall receive 4 hours of overtime pay per week, per dog, to defray the expenses of canine care outside of normal hours.

Garcia v. San Antonio Metropolitan Transit Authority. Fair Labor Standards Act.

Worcester Police Canines are the property of the City of Worcester.

6. DEPLOYMENT OF A CANINE:

Use within the City of Worcester

Requests for the immediate utilization of canine service in accordance with the guidelines of this policy may be made by a police official or, in the absence of a police official, by any officer at the scene of an incident.

Such a request will be made to the communications dispatcher who shall direct the canine assistance to the location. Upon arrival of the canine handler, he/she shall be responsible for determining whether the circumstances justify the use of a canine and for determining its utilization.

Special Situations

Whenever a canine is used in a special situation, the trained qualified canine handler has the right and obligation to decline orders to deploy the canine in an improper, illegal or in an excessively dangerous manner.

Use of a WPD canine outside the City of Worcester

All requests for canine assistance outside the City of Worcester shall be made in accordance with WPD Policy and Procedure NO. 807 Mutual Aid.

All WPD canines, except for the Friendly Find Search and Rescue canines and during an explosive ordnance device search, will be equipped with an e-collar. It consists of a special collar equipped with batteries, electric contact points, and a radio receiver tuned to the handler's handheld transmitter. E-collars allow police K-9s to be trained off leash and at a distance.

All WPD canine handlers will also be equipped with a break stick. A break stick is a tool used to safely release a dog's grip during a bite-and-hold situation.

7. DEPLOYMENT AND USE OF FORCE IN K-9 OPERATIONS:

K-9 deployment is a specialized use of force. All deployments shall be consistent with constitutional standards, DOJ guidance, and department policy.

Announcements

The following announcements should be given prior to deploying the K-9 for a search of a suspect: except when it poses an officer safety issue:

1. Your identity as a police officer
2. A warning to come out
3. Your intention to use a police work dog should the suspect refuse to come out
 - a. An example of a command is as follows "This is the Worcester Police Department Canine Unit. If you don't come out, I will send my dog, and he will find and may bite you."
 - b. All subsequent reports will include all warnings issued by a handler prior to the deployment of said canine

Inside of structures, announcements will be given each time the handler changes floors. When feasible announcements will be given in 3 prevalent languages of the City of Worcester.

Authorized Deployments

K-9s may be deployed when:

- The suspect is believed to have committed or is committing a violent felony (e.g. Homicide, armed robbery, aggravated assault, sexual assault).

- The suspect is committing or has committed serious misdemeanors where their actions pose immediate risk to officers or the public.
- A suspect is concealing themselves in a structure, vehicle, or area where they may ambush officers or escape.
- For searches and tracking (area, building, article, evidence, or scent), when such deployment increases safety and efficiency.

Lead Requirement

All K-9 searches will be conducted on-lead.

A handler may conduct an off-lead search or track only when they can articulate specific safety or environmental reasons, such as:

- The suspect is reasonably believed to be armed and poses a threat of death or serious bodily harm.
- Environmental obstacles prevent safe on-lead deployment (e.g., confined spaces, structural hazards, terrain).

Restrictions

K-9s shall not be used for minor offenses when the subject poses no threat.

K-9s shall not be used for crowd control at protests or demonstrations.

Use of Force Considerations

A K-9 apprehension (bite) constitutes a level 4 use of force. The handler must be able to articulate the necessity, reasonableness, and proportionality of the deployment.

Handlers must issue a verbal warning prior to deployment, when feasible.

Once a bite occurs, the handler must remove the K-9 as soon as it is safe to do so.

8. REPORTING USE OF FORCE INCIDENTS:

Any official police interaction

Whenever a sworn member of this department uses force in the performance of his or her duties, whether that involved an actual arrest or not, and physical force is used, beyond applying restraints and escorting an individual to comply, an incident report containing a detailing of that force shall be entered into the records management system (RMS). The pointing of any authorized police tool, with the purpose of compelling subject compliance constitutes a “use of force” and as such, must be reported. As with all reports entered into the RMS, the report shall be reviewed by a police supervisor.

Arrests and Custody

Whenever police force is used during an arrest or other lawful detainment, reporting thereof is required. This report shall describe the force that was used on the subject.

Initial Verbal Report to Supervisor

Whenever a sworn member of this department employs Lethal Force and or Less-Lethal Force Weapon Techniques in the performance of his or her duties, a verbal report of the incident shall be made to the officer's supervisor as soon as practically feasible. The supervisor will perform a review of the use of force and enter it into the RMS.

For the purposes of this section, Lethal Force and Less-Lethal Force Weapons include the following:

- A. Firearm
- B. Police Canine
- C. Baton
- D. O.C. Aerosol Spray
- E. Pepperball 40MM Gas Launcher
- F. Conducted Energy Weapon (Taser)
- G. Less Lethal Shotgun
- H. Tools of immediate means or opportunity
- I. Personal Weapons, i.e., hands, feet, head, elbows, knees utilized to strike

A use of force may result in injuries to the individual or the officer. The officer will notify an official of the injury as soon as practically feasible. An official will then respond to the scene. This will enable the official the ability to canvass the area to support evidence of the incident. The official will document their observations of the injury and action taken in their UOF Review Report.

Written Reporting

Pursuant to policy NO. 400 reports of the use of force must be entered into the RMS under the incident number as an arrest or supplementary report.

All use of force reports shall be reviewed and submitted prior to the end of the officer's tour of duty absent extenuating circumstances as determined by the Chief of Police or his designee. The designee shall submit a written report to the Chief of Police prior to that designee's end of tour of duty delineating the extenuating circumstances. In addition to this, the supervisor will enter their UOF Review under the same incident number.

Pursuant to policy NO. 400, for any incident perceived to be lethal in nature, reports by involved officers shall be submitted to and reviewed by a police supervisor no later than 72 hours after the incident occurred unless there are medical reasons or other extenuating circumstances as determined by the Chief of Police or his designee. The designee shall submit a written report to the Chief of Police prior to that designee's end of tour delineating the extenuating circumstances.

Copies of use of force reports relative to force are to be forwarded in hard copy form or via email to the following:

- Appropriate Deputy Chief
- Bureau of Professional Standards

- Training Division

9. INJURIES:

In the event of a K-9 apprehension or injury of an individual(s) the K-9 Handler shall:

- Request Emergency Medical Services as soon as practicable when a person sustains a canine bite. If the person requires additional medical attention, transport them to a medical facility for treatment.
- Notify the K-9 Unit Supervisor or Special Operations Supervisor and summon them to the scene.
- The on-scene Supervisor will request CSU to be notified and request color photographs be taken of the affected area(s) as well as photographs of the location of the apprehension.
- Complete all necessary reports documenting the incident.

In the event of an apprehension resulting in injury the K-9 Supervisor upon being summoned to the scene will also follow up at the hospital to interview the suspect. In circumstances where the K-9 Unit Supervisor is unavailable or involved in the incident, an uninvolved supervisor will respond and review the use of force incident. The review will be documented and memorialized in the RMS. The following questions are examples of questions that may be asked, Miranda warning should be given prior to the questioning of the suspect, and the questioning should be done on department issued Body Worn Camera:

1. What was your reason for not surrendering?
2. Where were you when police arrived?
3. Were you aware the police were looking for you?
4. Did you hear the police K-9 warnings being given?
5. What did you do after you heard the K-9 warnings?

10. SPECIAL EVENTS REGARDING EXPLOSIVE DETECTION DOG USE:

A significant event or large venue event, occurrence, contest, activity, or meeting which requires dedication of first responder resources to maintain the safety of the public while protecting property and infrastructure.

Types of Special Event

- Sporting Events
- Run/Walk Fund Raisers
- Parades
- Protests
- Holiday Celebrations
- Religious Ceremonies
- Political Events

- Events in attendance of 5000 or more people

Considerations for K9 manning and deployment

- Responsibility for the event — municipal, state, or federal
- Operational plan
- Duration/relief needed
- Size geographic footprint of event
- Maps/orientation/division of work
- Staging area/public safety compound needed
- Radios/communications/interoperable with other agencies/texting group
- Civilian Support Teams
- Explosive detection K9 (Additional)
- Known threats/intel (sharable)
- Training for assigned police officers
- Civilian training in advance — train them to act

Responsibilities

The K9 Unit Supervisor will complete an Operational Plan with the above information and submit it to the Event OIC in a timely fashion.

The K9 Unit Supervisor will act as the Department Liaison to outside law enforcement agencies regarding the manning and deployment of Explosive Detection Canines. It is recognized that the Massachusetts State Police Bomb Squad is the primary Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit for the City of Worcester. The K-9 Unit Supervisor will liaison with the MSP Bomb Squad to promote a professional relationship. To promote proficiency, the Worcester Police explosive detection canines may assist MSP Bomb Squad when feasible. When the MSP Bomb Squad is operational in the City of Worcester, the K-9 Supervisor will assist with any communication to/from City assets. In the event the K-9 Supervisor is not available the operations official will assume these duties.

11. DEPARTMENT CANINE VEHICLES:

A. Department vehicles that are issued to canine handlers will be equipped with heat detection systems, and window tinting.

B. Canine handlers will be issued department vehicles. Said vehicles will be authorized for use in conjunction with the deployment, training, safe handling, care, health, maintenance, and feeding of the canine.

Per:

Paul B. Saucier
Chief of Police

Revisions:

May 2025–

Section 4 “Qualified trainer” sentence and Supervisory tracking canine deployments and apprehensions paragraph. Section 5 Handlers, list and paragraphs to include the bullets. Section 6 Deployment of Canine. Section 7 Guidelines on the use of force in a canine deployment. Section 8 Reporting use of force incidents and supervisory role. Section 9 Injuries. Section 10 Special Event. Chief’s name change to Paul B. Saucier.

February 18, 2022–

Section 8 Reporting of Use of Force Incidents revised to be in accordance with Policy NO. 400. Section 7 Crowd Control (Restrictions) revised. Section 9 K-9 Apprehensions and Injuries added. Section 5 Handler Selection added.

Original Issue Date: November 5, 2025