

MAINE ASSOCIATION FOR SEARCH AND RESCUE

Search Dog Team Certification Standard Appendix E

Certification Tests: Air Scent Water Search

I. Application

- A. These tests apply to a Type II, Kind H search dog team which performs air scent water searches (per ASTM F1848-98, "Standard Classification for Search and Rescue Dog Crew/Teams.")

II. Certification Tests

A. Certification Requirements

1. A dog team must be currently certified as a Type II, Kind A, F, and/or G
2. A dog team need only pass the Shoreline Test to be certified for water search from shore. To be utilized for water search from a boat the dog team must pass both the Shoreline and Boat Tests.
3. A dog team with a verifiable find of a drowning victim in a search which takes place under circumstances equal to or exceeding those in the following tests may be certified for that application. The find must be verifiable by a MASAR-certified dog team handler or a member of a user agency able to describe the complete situation. When multiple dogs are used to confirm an alert, only the team that made the original find may be automatically certified. However, the situation may be used as a test if a suitable evaluator is present while the succeeding teams work. If the body of water is a small pond with less than 500 feet of shoreline, teams may search other small ponds nearby to fulfill the shoreline requirement.
4. The following requirements must be met before testing may begin:
 - a) The team must demonstrate safe boating and water safety practices.
 - (1) Evaluator(s) shall question the dog handler about water safety practices such as dealing with swift water, high banks, ice-choked shorelines, etc.
 - (2) The dog handler shall wear a PFD appropriate to the circumstances.
 - (3) For the Boat Test, the dog must demonstrate that it is calm and tractable in the type of boat commonly used for water searches (normally a motorboat with a motor of 5 HP or more, larger than a motorized canoe). A motorized canoe may be used for evaluation if it is the only type of watercraft available during the test, but the dog must have shown that it can successfully work out of larger craft during other training exercises.
 - b) The dog handler must describe to the evaluator the type of alert

- behavior exhibited by the dog for the type of test being conducted.
- c) The dog handler must describe his or her search pattern and strategy.
- B. Certification Tests
- 1. Shoreline Test
 - a) The area to be searched will be 500 feet of shoreline. The boundaries must be clearly marked on shore.
 - b) The wind direction must be approximately on shore.
 - c) The scent source may be cadaver scent, a diver, or cadaver scent placed in a scent pump. When cadaver scent is used it must produce a strong scent comparable to that of a diver. When a diver is used, rocks, stumps, weeds, or other objects should be utilized to hide the diver from the handler.
 - d) "False buoys" or other small, floating, anchored objects must be present in the search areas.
 - e) In still water the dog team shall locate a scent source placed in at least 2 feet of water between 6 and 30 feet from shore. The dog may indicate the location of the scent by swimming out to it or by indicating from the shoreline. From the dog's indication the handler must be able to tell the evaluator where the scent source is within the following limits:
 - (1) 50 feet if the source is more than 20 feet from shore
 - (2) 30 feet if the source is between 10 and 20 feet from shore
 - (3) 20 feet if the source is less than 10 feet from shore.
 - 2. Boat Test
 - a) The area to be searched shall be 5 acres or more.
 - b) The scent source may be cadaver scent, a diver, or cadaver scent placed in a scent pump. If cadaver scent is used, it should produce a strong scent comparable to that of a diver.
 - c) "False buoys" or other small, floating, anchored objects must be present in the search areas.
 - d) The evaluator shall tell the handler where to search and where the handler shall begin.
 - e) The handler should be started in a part of the search area far enough from the diver or scent is located to insure that the dog has searched at least 10 minutes before the diver or scent source is encountered. The dog must work more or less continuously during this time period.

- f) The dog must indicate on the diver or scent source once the scent is encountered.
- g) The dog handler must record the location of the dog's alert using a GPS unit.
- h) The dog handler shall direct the search pattern of the boat and give directions to the boat driver.
- i) The dog handler may direct the boat to enhance the dog's alert or to help locate the scent source.

C. General Testing Criteria:

1. The dog handler must inform the evaluator when he or she is certain the dog is alerting or reacting to the scent. After the handler has so informed the evaluator(s) and as long as the dog is working on its own, the handler must remain silent and not give any commands or encouragement to the dog. If the dog stops working and looks to the handler for guidance or gives an indication that requires acknowledgment by the handler, the handler may then give limited commands and praise. The handler may also reward the dog if that is required by the circumstances. However, the alert or indication by the dog must come from the dog alone and not as a result of the handler's commands or praise.
2. The handler may give commands to the dog while it is working, but these commands shall be kept to a minimum. The evaluator shall decide if praise or commands are excessive and the dog cannot work or alert without them. If the evaluator is in doubt, the team will not pass the test.
3. A dog that demonstrates a lack of understanding of the work or the inability to focus on the work for sufficient amounts of time will not pass the test.
4. Jumping out of the boat is an obvious alert behavior but it is not a safe practice and should be discouraged. Handlers shall take action to prevent its occurrence. However, no team will fail the test if the dog indicates by jumping out of the boat, unless the dog proves unmanageable and a danger to others in the boat.
5. Evaluators may be utilized as boat handlers. The evaluator must accompany the dog handler.
6. Teams will not be allowed to make an unlimited number of passes through the search area. If, in the opinion of the evaluator, the search area is covered more than twice without an indication from the dog, the evaluator may end the test. If the search pattern outlined by the handler degenerates significantly so that the search is no longer effective, the evaluator may also end the test. The evaluator shall utilize a GPS unit to document search patterns.