

MAINE SEARCH AND RESCUE DOGS (MESARD)
Standards and Evaluation Procedures
(Revised and Accepted 6/18/11)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. These standards are designed to ensure that MESARD operational SAR dog and handler teams and flankers will be professional and competent in their work. These standards meet or exceed the MASAR (Maine Association for Search and Rescue) standards, required for call out by the Maine Warden Service.
- 1.2. Teams wishing to test to the following standards will have demonstrated proficiency in the areas to be tested to the Training Director and/or operational handlers that have achieved evaluator status. When the team has fulfilled requirements for operational status, the Training Director will recommend a team for operational status and apply for MASAR certification of the team.
- 1.3. The SAR dog should be one of the working, herding, sporting or hound breeds of sound physical structure and temperament, and of adequate size and strength to negotiate the terrain encountered in wilderness areas.
- 1.4. The SAR dog handlers and flankers must be reasonably available to respond to search calls. In addition to individual training sessions, each operational SAR dog team will be required to spend a minimum of six hours each month training in SAR work at a formal MESARD training session, or with another operational team, or with an experienced dog handler or trainer. Teams not participating in the formal MESARD training sessions will submit a written description, signed by the attending handler or trainer, of training during that month to satisfy this requirement. An operational team that misses more than three consecutive months of formal MESARD training sessions may be subject to a review of its operational status by the officers. Teams are encouraged to work regularly, on their own, on all phases of training.

2. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL OPERATIONAL TEAMS (AIR OR GROUND SCENT)

- 2.1. The handler has current certification with the Maine Association for Search and Rescue (MASAR) as a Search Team Member <http://www.maineSearchandRescue.org/standards.htm>. Once the handler's MASAR certification expires, the handler will have a maximum of 6 months to re-certify.
- 2.2. The handler and dog will meet the requirements of the MASAR Basic Search Dog Certification Standard <http://www.maineSearchandRescue.org/standards.htm> with the following additions:
 - 2.2.1. Before undertaking any search certification tests, the handler will present their training records for inspection by the Training Director, or a designated member, to show that:
 - 2.2.1.1. If testing for air scent work, the team has completed a minimum of 50 air scent exercises, including basic runaways.
 - 2.2.1.2. If testing for ground scent work, the team has completed a minimum of 30 tracking/trailing exercises.
 - 2.2.1.3. The team must produce proof of having completed the Basic Temperament Test and the outside temperament test (if required).
 - 2.2.2. The handler must complete crime scene and courtroom testimony training that has been approved by the officers of MESARD.

3. CERTIFICATION TESTING FOR OPERATIONAL STATUS

- 3.1 Conditions for testing will meet the MASAR Basic Search Dog Standard with the following additions:
 - 3.1.1 Before beginning any field test, the dog handler shall describe to the evaluator the search plan to be used based on the scenario provided him by the evaluation team.
 - 3.1.2 Before beginning the test, the dog handler shall describe the dog's indication behavior to the evaluator.
- 3.2 **Certification Tests for Operational Status for Air Scent Wilderness Search**
 - 3.2.1 Teams shall meet the requirements of the MASAR Search Dog Team Certification Standard, Appendix B, "Certification Tests: Air Scent for Wilderness Search" <http://www.maineSearchandRescue.org/standards.htm>, plus:

3.2.2 The requirements of Part II, Section B, "Preliminary Certification Test" of Appendix G, "Certification Tests: Wilderness Land Human Remains Detection" <http://www.mainesearchandrescue.org/standards.htm> of the MASAR Search Dog Team Certification Standard.

3.3 Certification Tests for Operational Status for Basic Tracking/Trailing

3.3.1. Teams shall meet the requirements of the MASAR Search Dog Team Certification Standard, Appendix C, "Certification Tests: Basic Tracking/Trailing for Wilderness Search," <http://www.mainesearchandrescue.org/standards.htm> with the following changes or additions:

3.3.1.1. All tracks shall have a minimum age of 1 hour.

3.3.1.2. Hasty or "Trail" Search for Tracking/Trailing Dogs

3.3.1.2.3. The handler will be given a scent article for the victim.

The dog team will search a roadway, roadside or trail approximately ¼ of a mile long for the trail or scent of the victim.

3.3.1.2.4. The victim will be positioned 30 feet to the right or left of the roadway, roadside or trail and will have crossed the path of travel to create a scent trail.

3.3.1.2.5. The team will be allowed one pass up and back on the roadway, roadside or trail to locate the victim.

3.3.1.2.6. The roadway or roadside must not be a heavily travelled road that would pose a hazard to the team.

4. EVALUATOR QUALIFICATIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1. Evaluator's must meet the qualifications outlined in the MASAR Basic Search Dog Certification Standard and have the approval of the Training Director or President.

4.2. Evaluators are responsible for following the requirements of the MASAR Basic Search Dog Certification Standard plus any additional MESARD requirements.

4.3. During the initial certification of a team, no one evaluator shall perform more than 2 of the required certification tests for any one team.

5. RE-CERTIFICATION

5.1. MESARD Teams that have reached Operational Status in air scent or tracking must re-certify every year. The date the team's first re-certification is due will be one year from the teams' initial certification date by MASAR. After the first year, the re-certification due date will be one year from the last re-certification test that was passed by the team.

5.2. The Basic Testing Conditions which apply to certification tests, apply to re-certification tests except that subject unknown to dog, search areas unfamiliar to the team and the supplying of a map may be waived at the discretion of the Training Director or President.

5.3. Re-certification tests for air scent teams will consist of a minimum of a 40 acre area test with one victim and an evaluator following the team, and maintaining basic proficiency in on-going human remains scent training.

5.4. Re-certification for tracking/trailing teams will consist of one of the MASAR certification tracking tests, or the Search and Rescue Tracking/Trailing Test or an equivalent or harder test approved by the MESARD officers.

5.5. Teams that have been on leave more than 6 months must also re-certify according to the guidelines above.

5.6. Any team that has a find of a victim at a search may waive their re-certification tests for the year the find is made. Finds must be witnessed or authenticated by other MESARD or user agency members. The following year's certification date will be one year from the date of the find.

5.7. Teams that fail to re-certify within three months of their re-certification date may be subject to a review of their operational status by the officers.

6. LIMITED CERTIFICATION

6.1. Due to increasing age, sickness or injury, personnel or canines many not be capable of the full range of activities in areas they previously certified in. In this case, the Training Director, with the consent and advice of the officers, may issue a Limited Certification that will delineate what MESARD will allow the team to do at search operations, and if needed, what tests should be passed to restore the team to operational status. All such Limited Certifications must also be approved by MASAR.

6.2. In true emergency situations, the team may be fielded until more qualified teams arrive and take over the functions.

7 SPECIALTY TRAINING

7.1 Advanced Tracking Dog Team

- 7.1.1 Teams shall meet the requirements of the MASAR Search Dog Team Certification Standards, Appendix D, "Certification Tests: Advanced Tracking/Trailing for Wilderness Search"
<http://www.mainesearchandrescue.org/standards.htm> or
- 7.1.2 Pass the International Police Work Dog Association SAR Trailing Test or
- 7.1.3 A comparable nationally recognized test approved by the officers and MASAR.

7.2 Article Search/Clue Detection - Test Description

- 7.2.1 Teams testing must have obtained MESARD operational status as an air scent or tracking dog team. Experienced members may request an exemption from this requirement. All requests must be in writing and exemptions will require approval from a majority of the officers. Criteria for approval will include, but are not limited to, years of service as a certified MESARD dog handler, search call-out response and operational needs of the team.
- 7.2.2 Teams shall meet the requirements of the MASAR Search Dog Team Certification Standards, Appendix F, "Certification Tests: Wilderness Article Search/Clue Detection"
<http://www.mainesearchandrescue.org/standards.htm> or
- 7.2.3 A comparable nationally recognized test approved by the officers and MASAR.
- 7.2.4 Article Search/Clue Detection Teams must re-certify every two years.

7.3 Water Search Dog Team - Certification Requirements

- 7.3.1 Teams testing must have obtained MESARD operational status as an air scent or tracking dog team. Experienced members may request an exemption from this requirement. All requests must be in writing and exemptions will require approval from a majority of the officers. Criteria for approval will include, but are not limited to, years of service as a certified MESARD dog handler, search call-out response and operational needs of the team.
- 7.3.2 For a team to be utilized for water search from shore, only the Shoreline Test must be passed. To be utilized for water search from a boat, both the Shoreline and Boat Test must be passed.
- 7.3.3 Any team with a verifiable find of a drowning victim in a search which takes place under circumstances equal to or exceeding those of these tests will be certified or re-certified for that application. The find must be verifiable by another MESARD handler or member of a user agency able to describe the complete situation. When multiple dogs are used to confirm an initial alert, only the team that initially called the possible find will 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.
- 7.3.4 **General Evaluation Criteria:**
 - 7.3.4.1 Teams shall meet the requirements of the MASAR Search Dog Team Certification Standards, Appendix E, "Certification Tests: Air Scent Water Search"
<http://www.mainesearchandrescue.org/standards.htm> or
 - 7.3.4.2 A comparable nationally recognized test approved by the officers and MASAR.
 - 7.3.4.2.1 The following criteria should be followed during the testing process:
 - 7.3.4.2.1.1 The handler will indicate to the evaluator once they are sure the dog is alerting or reacting to the scent of the diver or human remains detection material. Once the handler does this, the handler must remain silent and not give any commands or encouragement to the dog as long as the dog is working on its own. 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. 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. The handler may also reward the dog if that is required by the circumstances. It will be up to the evaluator to 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.

- 7.3.4.2.1.2 The handler may give commands to the dog while it is working, but these commands may not be excessive. Any dog that shows a lack of understanding of the work or an inability to focus on the work for sufficient amounts of time will not pass the test.
- 7.3.4.2.1.3 The dog's jumping out of the boat is an obvious alert behavior, but it is not a safe practice and should be discouraged. Handlers should take action to discourage the dog from jumping out of the boat. However, no team will be failed for the dog jumping out of the boat unless the dog proves unmanageable and a danger to others in the boat.
- 7.3.4.2.1.4 Evaluators may be utilized as boat handlers. The evaluator will accompany the dog handler.
- 7.3.4.2.1.5 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 and drags on, the evaluator may also end the test. It is recommended that the evaluator utilize a GPS to keep track of search patterns.

7.3.4.3 Water Search Dog teams must re-certify every two years.

7.3.5 Human Remains Detection (HRD) Search Dog Team - Certification Requirements

- 7.3.5.1 Teams testing must have obtained MESARD operational status as an air scent or tracking dog team. Experienced members may request an exemption from this requirement. All requests must be in writing and exemptions will require approval from a majority of the officers. Criteria for approval will include, but are not limited to, years of service as a certified MESARD dog handler, search call-out response and operational needs of the team.
- 7.3.5.2 Teams shall meet the requirements of the MASAR Search Dog Team Certification Standards, Appendix G, "Certification Tests: Wilderness Land Human Remains Detection Team" <http://www.mainesearchandrescue.org/standards.htm> or
- 7.3.5.3 A comparable nationally recognized test approved by the officers and MASAR.
- 7.3.5.4 HRD Detection teams must re-certify every two years as required by the MASAR Standards in Appendix G.

7.4 Disaster Search Dog Team - Certification Requirements

7.4.1 The team will have met some nationally accepted standard for Disaster Search.

7.5 Avalanche Search Dog Team - Certification Requirements

7.5.1 The team will have met some nationally accepted standard for Avalanche Search.

8 OPERATIONAL LEADER

- 8.1 MESARD Operational Leaders shall be responsible for the deployment of MESARD teams at search scenes and serve as the MESARD representative to the search command.
- 8.2 MESARD Operational Leaders shall be the leader of MESARD members at search scenes.
- 8.3 **Qualification Requirements:**
 - 8.3.1 A minimum of three years experience as a certified handler.
 - 8.3.2 Participation in a minimum of 10 searches.
 - 8.3.3 Demonstrated ability at MESARD training sessions to define search areas and assign teams to those areas.
 - 8.3.4 Operational Leader status requires approval by a majority vote of the membership at a business meeting.
 - 8.3.5 In the absence of an Operational Leader, MESARD members present at a search incident will designate an acting Operational Leader for that search.

9 SUPPORT PERSONNEL

- 9.1 **Flankers** - The position of flanker is intended to provide trained, direct support and assistance to MESARD dog teams during searches and trainings. Flankers shall be Affiliate Members of MESARD and shall not train a dog with MESARD.
 - 9.1.1 **Operational Status Requirements for Flankers:**
 - 9.1.1.1 Maintain MASAR Ground Searcher Certification.

- 9.1.1.2 Demonstrate navigation proficiency sufficient to navigate for a K9 team at a search incident (GPS, map & compass).
- 9.1.1.3 The flanker must complete crime scene and courtroom testimony training that has been approved by the officers of MESARD.
- 9.1.1.4 The flanker shall show that she/he is equipped with the minimum equipment recommended by MASAR or MASAR-accepted standards for a basic ground searcher.
- 9.1.1.5 Demonstrate proper radio communication skills.
- 9.1.1.1 Attend a minimum of six MESARD monthly training sessions each calendar year.

10 APPENDIX 1 - Evaluation Forms and Check Off Sheet – See the appropriate MASAR forms at <http://www.maineSearchandRescue.org/standards.htm>

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