

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 for human remains (per ASTM F1848-98, "Standard Classification for Search and Rescue Dog Crew/Teams.")
- B. A dog team need only pass the Shoreline Test to be certified for water search from shore. A dog team must pass both the Shoreline and Boat Tests to be utilized for water search from a boat.
- C. A dog team with a verifiable find of human remains 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 bodies of water nearby to fulfill the shoreline requirement.
- D. Dog teams currently certified by another agency or organization may request certification under this standard.
 1. The field evaluation requirements of the standard under which the team was certified must equal or exceed those defined in this standard.
 2. The applicant shall be responsible for documenting or demonstrating this equivalency.
 3. If the field evaluation requirements of the alternate certification standard equal or exceed this standard, the dog team may be certified as an Air Scent Water Search team.
 4. The Standards Committee reserves the right to require that, upon request, a team pass the tests defined below.

II. Preliminary Requirements

- A. Before scheduling any of the Certification Tests the handler must demonstrate a knowledge of safe boating and water safety practices, including working on and around swift water, high banks, ice-choked shorelines, etc.
- B. Before beginning each Certification Test the handler must do the following:
 1. Describe to the evaluator the type of alert behavior exhibited by the dog for the type of test being conducted.
 2. Describe his or her search pattern and strategy.

- C. During each Certification Test the handler must wear a PFD appropriate to the circumstances.

III. Certification Tests

A. 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.

B. 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.