TEXAS A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX)
STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

Canine Training Program

VOLUME 1

REFERENCE NO. 1-20

1.00 PURPOSE

1.01   The purpose of this standard is to provide a guideline for the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) Canine Search Specialist (CSS) while training a potential canine partner to successfully pass and complete the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Certification Evaluation (CE).

2.00 OBJECTIVE

2.01   The objective of this guideline is to define the process to be used by the CSS while preparing a potential canine partner for FEMA Certification.

3.00 DEFINITIONS

3.01   **Canine Training Program:** A series of screenings, trainings, progress checks, classes, and evaluations designed to prepare the CSS/canine team to successfully complete the FEMA Certification Evaluation.

3.02   **Canine Screening:** A screening performed at Disaster City and administrated by 2 current TEEX CSS or TEEX Canine Evaluator members that have either had a FEMA certified canine for a minimum of 3 years or are FEMA canine evaluators. A canine may only be screened once. Information regarding the Canine Screening is outlined in the TEEX K9 Screening PDF.

3.03   **Canine Medical Clearance:** A clearance for canines provided by a licensed veterinarian stating that the canine is fit for duty. The TEEX Canine Medical Clearance Letter is good for 1 year from the date of exam and must be valid to continue working the canine.

3.04   **Certification Evaluation (CE):** A rigorous national certification in Urban Search and Rescue that must be completed for the canine/handler team to be a FEMA

certified team. Testing specifics are outlined in the FEMA Canine Search Team Certification Evaluation Handbook for each canine search discipline.

3.05   **Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA):** An assessment of the basic disaster search skills that is used to determine the team's next step in the evaluation process. FSA testing specifics are outlined in the FEMA Canine Search Team Certification Evaluation Handbook – Live Find and in the FEMA Canine Search Team Certification Evaluation Handbook- Human Remains Detection- Bark Alert.

3.06   **Proof of Ownership:** May consist of a purchase/transfer contract or adoption documentation or other satisfactory documentation showing ownership of the canine.

3.07   **Progress Checks:** Analysis of progress made by the canine outlined for the Live Find Program and for the Human Remains Detection Program.

3.08   **Progress Check 2:** Must be administered at Disaster City, by one FEMA canine evaluator and one other current CSS member that has had a FEMA certified canine for at least 3 years. Other Progress Checks may be administered at any location that provides the required equipment and search site necessary for the skills outlined in the Progress Check.

4.00 GENERAL GUIDELINES

4.01   Prior to screening, the CSS must provide the TX-TF1 Canine Coordinator with proof of ownership demonstrating that the canine is solely owned by the CSS, unless the canine is owned by TX-TF1 or the National Disaster Search Dog Foundation.

4.02   In order to be considered for the Canine Training Program, the CSS must successfully screen the canine and be approved by the Canine Coordinator.

4.03   Upon successful completion of the Canine Screening, the CSS must obtain a Canine Medical Clearance letter signed by a licensed veterinarian. After this is received by the Canine Coordinator, the canine may be admitted to the Canine Training Program.

4.04   A canine may be removed from the Canine Training Program if it displays unprovoked aggression toward a canine or human. The decision to remove a canine rests with the Canine Coordinator and Operations Chief.

4.05   All CSS/canine teams in the Canine Training Program will be expected to perform Progress Checks as outlined by the Canine Coordinator. After the canine has been accepted into the Canine Training Program, the Canine Coordinator will

provide the CSS with dates for each of the Progress Checks, FSA, and CE. All Progress Checks, FSA, and CE will be completed on this timeline. Any subsequent changes made to this timeline must be approved by the Canine Coordinator. In the event the canine is not ready to take a Progress Check as scheduled, the CSS may request a postponement of the Progress Check. The request will identify the training issue, the plan, and timeline to remedy the training issue.

4.06   All tasks on Progress Checks must be completed. With the exception of Progress Check 2 (see Section 4.07 below), if any task is not completed at the initial Progress Check date, the Canine Coordinator may recommend a remediation plan. The CSS/canine team may also be asked to repeat the Progress Check tasks that were not completed.

4.07   In order to continue in the Canine Training Program, the CSS/canine team must successfully complete 100% of the following elements of Progress Check 2: search, bark alert, bark latency and commitment to source. The canine/CSS team must successfully complete 80% of the remaining elements: agility, directional control, and obedience. In the event the CSS/canine team fails Progress Check 2, if both evaluators agree, the CSS/canine team may be given one opportunity to repeat the Progress Check. The evaluators shall document their reasons for recommending the CSS/canine team be allowed to repeat the Progress Check on the evaluation forms.

4.08   Abuse (physical, mental, verbal, etc.) of a canine is not acceptable at any time and may result in appropriate disciplinary action.

4.09   If any of the above listed criteria are not met, the canine and\or CSS may be subject to removal from the program.