

TEXAS A&M TASK FORCE ONE

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

Canine Training Program

VOLUME 1

REFERENCE NO. 1-20

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.01 The purpose of this standard is to provide guidelines for the Texas A&M Task Force Canine Program.

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 and the requirements for keeping a certified canine team deployable.

3.00 DEFINITIONS

- 3.01 **Assessor:** Must be a currently rostered CSS with TX-TF who has successfully certified and deployed with TX-TF as a CST.
- 3.02 **Canine Medical Clearance:** A veterinary clearance for canines provided by the TX-TF 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.
- 3.03 **Canine Screening:** A screening performed at Disaster City and administrated by 2 current TX-TF CSS 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 TX-TF K9 Screening document.
- 3.04 **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 and become a deployable CST with TX-TF.
- 3.05 **Canine Training Task Book:** The TX-TF document that guides the process of training a canine team in preparation for the FEMA CE.

- 3.06 **CSS:** Canine Search Specialist
- 3.07 **CSS Skill Set Hours:** TX-TF sanctioned or sponsored CSS training time. Training must be completed by both handler and canine. Both must actively participate in training for the hours to qualify.
- 3.08 **CST:** Canine Search Team; Canine and CSS team
- 3.09 **FEMA Canine Evaluator:** A CSS or STM who has been designated as a Canine Evaluator by FEMA.
- 3.10 **FEMA CE:** FEMA Canine Evaluation. Criteria for this test are outlined in FEMA USAR Operations Manual Annex G- Canine Search Team Certification Evaluation Handbook.
- 3.11 **FEMA FSA:** FEMA Foundation Skills Assessment. Criteria for this test are outlined in FEMA USAR Operations Manual Annex G- Canine Search Team Certification Evaluation Handbook.
- 3.12 **Progress Checks:** Analysis of progress made by the canine outlined in the TX-TF Canine Training Task Book.
- 3.13 **Proof of Ownership:** May consist of a purchase/transfer contract or adoption documentation or other satisfactory documentation showing ownership of the canine.
- 3.14 **Standby Status:** A team on standby status will be removed from Code Red and will not be first up for any deployment. A canine team listed in standby status is deployable only if a roster position cannot be filled by a team that has met the training requirements outlined in this policy.

4.00 GENERAL GUIDELINES

Canine Training Program

- 4.01 Prior to screening a prospective canine, the CSS must provide the TX-TF1 Canine Coordinator with proof of current vaccinations and request screening for the canine via email.
- 4.02 In order to be considered for the Canine Training Program, the CSS must successfully complete the TX-TF Canine Screening as outlined in the TX-TF Canine Screening Document 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 the TX-TF veterinarian and provide

ownership demonstrating that the canine is solely owned by the CSS or Category 5 K9. 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 will be made by the Canine Coordinator and Operations Chief.
- 4.05 All CST in the Canine Training Program will be expected to complete the TX-TF Canine Training Task Book 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 completion of each of the Progress Checks, FSA, and CE. All Progress Checks, FSA, and CE will be completed on this timeline.
- In the event the CST will not complete a Progress Check as scheduled, the CSS may request an extension. The request will identify the issue preventing completion on the previously outlined timeline, the training or remediation plan, and the timeline to remedy the issue. Any subsequent changes made to this timeline must be reviewed by the Canine Coordinator and Operations Chief for possible change.
- If the Task Book is not completed as outlined the CSS, Canine or both may be removed from the Canine Training Program.
- 4.06 Abuse (physical, mental, verbal, etc.) of a canine is not acceptable at any time and may result in appropriate disciplinary action.

Standby Status

- 4.07 Canine Search Team can be placed on standby status for the following circumstances:
- Failure to attend recurrent CSS Skill Set Hours (minimum 16 hours per 90-day period)
 - Recovery from injury or illness (as determined by the Team Veterinarian or Team Medical Director)
- 4.08 The CSS will be notified via email, by the Canine Coordinator when they are being placed on Standby Status.
- 4.09 When a Canine Search Team is listed in Standby Status they will be removed from Code Red. The CST will not be first up for deployments. They may be deployed if the position cannot be filled by any certified team not on Standby Status.

- 4.10 If the CST absence is between 90-180 days they will be asked to complete Level 1 Operational Assessment.
- 4.11 If the CST absence is 180-365 days the team will be asked to complete Level 2 Operational Assessment.
- 4.12 Any CST that has been on standby or reserve status for more than 365 days, will be subject to the guidelines listed in SOG 1-07 Member Participation. When requesting reinstatement and a return to full duty, the CST must meet all position and team requirements for being fully deployable and complete level 2 operational assessment before returning to the deployable roster.

Operational Assessment

- 4.13 All operational assessment skills a CST will be required to complete will be outlined in writing by the Canine Coordinator prior to scheduling the proficiency testing.
- 4.14 Level 1 Operational Assessment – Teams may be asked to perform any portion of the following:
- Any skill(s) equivalent to those required for the FEMA FSA
 - Any skill(s) equivalent to any portion of the FEMA CE
- 4.15 Level 2 Operational Assessment – Teams will complete all of the following:
- Skills equivalent to the FEMA FSA
 - Skills equivalent to the FEMA CE

Process for returning to normal deployable status

- 4.16 The CSS will notify the Canine Coordinator that they will be returning to training and request an operational assessment. When requesting operational assessment, the CSS will submit canine training records from any training they participated in during their absence. After reviewing the training logs the Canine Coordinator will outline skills required for the operational assessment and schedule testing.
- 4.17 Operational assessment times and locations will be scheduled by the Canine Coordinator. Special or extraordinary training should not be scheduled in order to accommodate operational assessments. It should be completed during regularly scheduled training events and not reduce training time for the other team members.
- 4.18 All operational assessments will be administered by the Canine Coordinator, FEMA Canine Evaluators or a CSS designated by the Canine Coordinator.

- 4.19 All returning canines must obtain a new canine medical clearance letter, based on an examination by the team veterinarian before the completion of operational assessment.
- 4.20 When operational assessments have been successfully completed, score sheets from all assessments will be placed in the team's personnel records and the team will be returned to normal deployable status.