

# American Rescue Dog Association

## Area Search Certification Evaluation

### Setup Instructions and Assessment Criteria

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#### **Description**

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The total search area will consist of terrain typical to that encountered in the region where the evaluation is being conducted. It is preferable that the area consists of mixed terrain (e.g., mixture of light and dense brush). The total size (acreage) of the search area may vary by region (e.g., for daylight conditions in areas with moderate ground cover and changes in elevation under moderate weather conditions, 80 to 120 acres is suggested). It is the responsibility of the evaluators to determine the size of the search area based on the terrain, weather, and light conditions and to ensure that the total size of the search area is such that it can be reasonably searched within 4 to 6 hours.

#### **Purpose**

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The purpose of the Area Search Certification Evaluation is to accurately and uniformly assess a canine team's capability to perform the skills necessary to locate missing persons in a wilderness or rural environment.

#### **Objectives**

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The objectives of Area Search Certification Evaluation are to:

- Provide uniform methods to determine the current operational readiness of an area search canine team.
- Develop a fair and objective process to certify an Area Search Canine Search Specialist Team.
- Evaluate the ability of the canine team to:
  - Assess the situation
  - Plan, brief and conduct an effective search
  - Demonstrate land navigation skills
  - Demonstrate medical skills to include basic assessment and initial treatment
  - Demonstrate knowledge of crime scene preservation
  - Demonstrate knowledge of appropriate radio protocol
  - Document search results and effectively debrief
  - Remain effective in a long-term working situation to include the ability to continue working after locating 1 or more persons.

#### **Evaluation Procedures**

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- A minimum of two (2) ARDA Team Evaluators are required to conduct the Area Search Certification Evaluation.
- The duration of this evaluation can be no less than 4 hours and no more than 6 hours.
- The testing team must be actively searching for a minimum of 2 hours under night-time conditions. The night requirement may be incorporated into this evaluation or it may be met by completing the Night Assessment (see criteria as referenced at the end of this document).

- There will be a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 4 subjects, who are unfamiliar to the canine, placed within the search area. The subjects will be placed a minimum of 30 minutes prior to the start of the evaluation. Each subject is to remain at the location placed (e.g., subjects are to remain stationary) until released from duty by the evaluator.
- At least one subject, but no more than 2, will require medical assistance.
- One subject will be “deceased” and the handler will be required to demonstrate appropriate crime scene preservation techniques.
- The evaluators will conduct a brief uniform and equipment check of the team before starting the evaluation. If the team is lacking in any important clothing or equipment that renders the team ineffective or unsafe in the field, the evaluation will be terminated immediately.
- The evaluators will conduct a briefing in which the handler will be given pertinent information about the search scenario. The evaluators will answer any questions that the handler asks. The evaluators will assign the handler one or more tasks during the search, and will accompany the team on its tasks and observe its performance. The evaluators may or may not provide additional information and tasking as the search progresses.
- The evaluators will provide the handler with a topographic map of the search area and a radio for the evaluation. If possible, a base camp radio will be manned by an assistant during the evaluation. If a base camp radio operator is not available, one of the evaluators will simulate this role during the evaluation.
- A maximum of 30 minutes will be allowed from end of the briefing process until the team heads into the field.
- The handler must begin their initial search task within 30 minutes of leaving base.
- Prior to starting their search task(s), the handler is required to communicate to the evaluators their search strategy. The handler is then to execute that strategy. Changes in strategy are permissible; however, the handler is to communicate their reasoning to the evaluators.
- The measured time for the evaluation will begin when the team begins their initial search task and ends when either the team locates all of the missing subjects, the evaluator informs the handler that the final task is complete, or the maximum time limit has been met.
- After returning to base the handler will have a maximum of 30 minutes to prepare for debrief.
- At the conclusion of the field evaluation, the handler will provide the evaluators a debrief of the assigned search task(s). The handler is responsible to provide information about the search task(s) the team performed, to include the search area covered, times, clues, weather, and any other important information. The handler shall draw a map or maps of areas searched.
- At the conclusion of the evaluation, each evaluator is responsible for filling out the appropriate evaluation form and debriefing the handler on their performance. One of the evaluators will be responsible for collecting all paperwork from the handler (e.g., maps and notes) and distributing the paperwork to the appropriate person within their unit (typically the evaluation director or secretary). The designated individual within the ARDA member unit will then be responsible for submitting the appropriate paperwork to the ARDA Evaluation Director.

## **Criteria**

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Evaluators will consider not only the successful conclusion of the evaluation, but also the following:

- The handler must plan and execute a good search strategy based on a correct analysis of the situation, the conditions, and the detection capabilities of the canine.
- The handler must use correct radio protocol.
- The handler must demonstrate the ability to use a map and compass to:
  - Orient themselves
  - Get to and stay in their assigned search area(s)
  - Grid the search area(s)
  - Identify their location using appropriate map coordinates
- The team must search the assigned area within the time limit with no significant gaps (e.g., areas inadequately covered by the handler and/or canine).

**Note:** The exception to this is an area that it is impossible to or not safe to search. Such areas are to be left unsearched, but the handler is to mark the area on their map and be prepared to explain this omission during the search debrief.

- The handler must use flagging tape appropriately (e.g., mark area covered, alerts, clues, etc.).
- The team should be prepared to search in all types of terrain typical for their region as well as in varying weather and light conditions.
- The canine must range at a distance appropriate for the wind, terrain, ground cover, weather, and light conditions.
- The handler must recognize and correctly interpret the behavior of the canine.
- The canine must demonstrate the ability to detect human scent and the persistence to work the scent from the point of detection to the scent source (the subject).
- The canine must be willing to leave the handler and approach the subject.
- The canine must demonstrate an easily identifiable trained indication of a "find" (e.g., bark alert or recall/refind).
- The canine must not show aversion to approaching the subject.
- The canine must demonstrate good behavior toward the subject and may not do anything that might injure the subject.
- The handler must provide appropriate aid to the subjects.
- If it appears to be a potential crime scene, the handler is to use good crime scene preservation methods and minimize disturbance of the area where the "find" is made.
- The canine must demonstrate the ability and willingness to return to work, after making a find, and focus on finding additional subjects.
- The canine must locate all of the subjects and indicate to the handler that each subject has been located within the allotted time.
- The canine and handler are to demonstrate good working stamina for the duration of the search. This element includes the maintenance of an acceptable working pace for the duration of the evaluation.
- While in the field, the handler must exhibit team leadership skills by taking proper care of themselves, their dog and any escorts on the team. This should include:
  - Ensuring the humans and the canine stay properly hydrated

- Ensuring that neither humans or the dog become dangerously overheated or cold
- Taking appropriate breaks
- The handler must draw maps of the areas searched, including all pertinent information such as:
  - Name of handler, canine and date
  - North arrow
  - Wind direction and speed
  - Start location and time
  - Point Last Seen (PLS) and/or Last Know Point (LKP)
  - Probability of Detection (POD)
  - Terrain and other prominent features
  - Hazards
  - Path and direction of travel
  - Give appropriate map coordinates or mark on the map the location of alerts and clues as well as the time they were located.
  - Give appropriate map coordinates or mark on the map the location of the subjects and the time they were located.
  - Finish location and time
- The handler must be able to relate, to the evaluators during debrief, the pertinent information about the task(s) they performed.



Pass/Fail

# American Rescue Dog Association Area Search Certification Evaluation

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Handler: \_\_\_\_\_ Dog: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject (1): \_\_\_\_\_ Time Located: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject (2): \_\_\_\_\_ Time Located: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject (3): \_\_\_\_\_ Time Located: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject (4): \_\_\_\_\_ Time Located: \_\_\_\_\_

Weather: **Temp** \_\_\_\_\_° **Humidity** \_\_\_\_\_ **Wind Direction/Speed** \_\_\_\_\_ mph

Condition:  Clear  Cloudy  Fog  Rain  Snow

Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Finish Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Average Range (Distance): \_\_\_\_\_ Recall/Refind (Distance): \_\_\_\_\_

Bark Alert (Distance): \_\_\_\_\_

| Handler   |  |          |
|---|--|----------|
| Search Technique  | Pass/Fail  | Comments |
| Effectively brief   | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |          |
| Recognize wind/terrain conditions                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |          |
| Explain/use systematic search method                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |          |
| Negotiate conditions  | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |          |
| Maintain concentration  | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |          |
| Use map and compass effectively                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |          |
| Ability to grid the search area appropriately                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |          |
| Use pace count effectively  | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |          |
| Use flagging tape appropriately                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |          |
| Ability to pinpoint location via UTM coordinates or triangulation | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |          |
| Ability to recognize and follow-up on evidence/clues              | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |          |
| Cover assigned area thoroughly                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |          |
| Use of proper radio communications                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |          |

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| Demonstrate medical skills                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| Demonstrate appropriate actions at crime scene | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| Effectively debrief                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| <b>Handling Ability</b>                        | <b>Pass/Fail</b>   | <b>Comments</b> |
| Maintain control of the dog                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| Encourage the dog                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| Allow the dog freedom to work                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| Recognize and follow-up on alerts              | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| Reward dog as appropriate                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| Break and/or water dog as appropriate          | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| <b>Canine</b>                                  |  |                 |
| <b>Search Skills</b>                           | <b>Pass/Fail</b>   | <b>Comments</b> |
| Eagerness of the dog to work the problem       | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| Negotiate conditions                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| Maintain concentration                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| Ignore distractions                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| Willing to leave handler                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| Work pattern to cover area                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| Willing to search for next subject             | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| Demonstrate good pace/endurance                | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| <b>Subject Location</b>                        | <b>Pass/Fail</b>   | <b>Comments</b> |
| Clearly located subjects                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| Have recognizable alert                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| Eagerness of the dog to approach subjects      | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| Recall/refind or bark alert                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |
| Response to reward/play                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail |                 |

