

# American Rescue Dog Association



## Standards and Certification Procedures

# American Rescue Dog Association



## Section II – Area Search Certification Evaluation

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# Area Search Certification Evaluation

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## Basic Field Assessments

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### Objective

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The basic area search field assessments are used as a means to measure the progress and assess the Canine Search Specialist Team as they learn the skills necessary to achieve area search certification. Each problem is used to assess the team's ability to perform specific skills. The assessments are meant to be given in order as the specific skills necessary for successful completion will build as the team progresses through the assessment process. Once this process is complete, the team should possess the necessary expertise critical to the high level of performance necessary to successfully complete the area search certification evaluation.

### Guidelines

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- The open field, trail, light brush, dense brush, and structure assessment will be conducted by at least one (1) rostered ARDA Evaluator. The night assessment will be conducted by at least two (2) rostered ARDA Evaluators.
- The Canine Search Specialist Team must successfully complete the following basic field assessments:
  - Open Field
  - Trail
  - Light Brush
  - Dense Brush
  - Night
- The assessments should be completed in the order specified above. It is recommended that the team being assessed not wait until they are near operational performance level to begin this process, but that each assessment be

completed as the team masters the skills necessary to successfully complete the assessment.

- Specific elements for each assessment will be identified as “critical”. The list of critical elements will increase as the team progresses through the assessment process (e.g., there are more critical elements on the light brush assessment than are on the trail assessment).
- Critical elements are those that are considered to be important enough, at the level of development expected for that assessment, that they must be met at a satisfactory level for the canine team to pass the assessment.
- Non-critical elements are those that are not required at the level of development expected for that assessment. However, if applicable to the assessment and if performed, they will be assessed as a courtesy to the handler to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses.
- The light brush, dense brush, or night assessment will include a simulated emergency medical scenario to assess the handler’s first aid knowledge and skills in the field. One of these problems will also include a simulated crime scene to assess the handler’s knowledge of crime scene preservation. The medical emergency and the crime scene preservation skills will not be assessed during the same problem.
- The evaluator will weigh the significance of any mistakes and decides for each if it warrants an unsatisfactory mark for the element. Any weaknesses that are seen in an assessment are to be noted and must be corrected or show significant improvement by the next assessment. Upon completion of all assessments, the canine team should have demonstrated a high level of performance for all criteria.
- At the conclusion of each assessment, the evaluator is responsible for completing the appropriate assessment forms and for reviewing the team’s performance with the handler. The evaluator 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).

## Open Field Assessment

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### Objective

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Direct observation of the canine team's basic search skills - specifically the canine's ranging and air-scenting ability, as well as its eagerness to locate and engage with the subject for its reward.

### Setup

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An area 40 to 80 acres in size consisting of a field or fields containing little or no brush that would inhibit air flow.

### Guidelines

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- One (1) subject shall be placed anywhere within the area. The subject must be found by air-scenting, so it is critical that the problem be set up to minimize the likelihood of the canine scenting the subject's track (ground scent).
- Demonstration of the canine's ability to range away from the handler is an important component of this assessment. No scent articles or clues are to be intentionally placed as they may distract the canine from the target odor (the subject).
- The duration of this assessment may not exceed two (2) hours.
- The canine team must be actively searching for at least 40 minutes in order to demonstrate the canine's ability to concentrate on the task at hand without being unduly distracted or losing interest.
- The handler must efficiently and effectively cover the assigned search area.
- The canine must make the find with no assistance from the handler or the subject.

### Critical Elements

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The following elements must be met at a satisfactory level in order to successfully complete this assessment:

- The handler must demonstrate the knowledge and ability to determine wind, temperature, and terrain conditions and how this relates to the planning and execution of their search strategy.
- The handler must grid the assigned area(s) in either a grid of parallel, evenly spaced sweeps or in a zigzag pattern so as to provide adequate coverage of the search area.
- The handler must be capable of interpreting the canine's behavior and reacting accordingly (e.g., ability to recognize and follow-up on alerts).
- The canine must locate the subject within the specified time limit.
- The canine must range at a distance appropriate for the wind, temperature, and terrain conditions while maintaining adequate contact with its handler.
- The canine must demonstrate long range detection appropriate for the conditions and the persistence to work the scent from the initial detection of target odor to the point of source (the subject).
- The canine must eagerly engage in, and remain focused on the task of locating the subject without being unduly distracted or losing interest.
- The canine must locate the subject via air-scent with no assistance from the handler and willingly leave the handler and approach the subject.
- The canine must demonstrate its trained indication when it locates the subject.
- The canine must eagerly engage the subject for its reward.
- The canine demonstrates appropriate behavior towards the subject (e.g., the canine does nothing that may injure the subject).

### **Non-Critical Elements**

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The following elements are not required in this assessment and do not affect the successful completion, but if applicable to the scenario and if performed, they will be assessed as a courtesy to the handler to indicate areas of strength and weakness.

- Appropriate use of communication protocol. This element includes the handler's understanding of when to initiate communication and relay pertinent information.
- Handler navigations skills. Uses map and compass to get to and stay in the assigned search area, can determine location via UTM/USNG coordinates, can use GPS to track path of travel and mark waypoints.

- Handler uses surveyors flagging or equivalent to mark area covered.
- The handler must complete a hand-drawn map after the completion of each assigned task. The map should include all pertinent information: name of handler, name of canine, date, north arrow, wind direction and speed, start point and time, end point and time, PLS (if in sector), POD, terrain and prominent features, the path of travel (track), location of alerts, indications, and the subject.
- Handler is able to relate pertinent information during debriefing.

## Trail

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### Objective

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Observation of the handler's ability to search along an assigned trail and the canine's ability and eagerness to detect and follow the human scent of a stranger

### Setup

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A trail at least 1 mile (1600 meters) in length, in which approximately 90% of the trail runs through an area that consists of ground cover and/or vegetation which will moderately inhibit airflow (e.g., moderately wooded area).

### Guidelines

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- One (1) subject, who is a stranger to the canine, shall be placed so that the canine team has to cover approximately 1 mile before making the find. The subject may or may not cross the trail and will be hidden no more than 100 feet from either side of the trail. Effort should be made to place the subject so that their scent will cross the trail. If this is not possible, the subject must cross the trail in order to give the canine the opportunity to use both ground and air-scent to locate the subject.
- The duration of this problem may not exceed two (2) hours.
- The handler will perform a search of the assigned trail and is responsible for coverage of the entire trail as well as 100 feet on either side of the trail.
- Due to the navigational criteria included in this assessment, the problem needs to be set up so that there is a need to use a map and compass to get to and stay on the correct trail.

- There will be at least 1 but no more than 2 clues placed within six feet of either side of the trail. **Note:** It is not a failure of the assessment if the clues are not located.
- The canine must make the find with minimal assistance from the handler and no assistance from the subject.
- The canine team must be actively searching for at least 40 minutes in order to demonstrate the canine's ability to concentrate on the task at hand without being unduly distracted or losing interest.

## Critical Elements

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The following elements must be met at a satisfactory level in order to successfully complete this assessment:

- The handler must demonstrate the knowledge and ability to determine wind, temperature, and terrain conditions and how this relates to the planning and execution of their search strategy.
- Handler navigations skills. Uses map and compass to get to and stay in the assigned search area, can determine location via UTM/USNG coordinates, can use GPS to track path of travel and mark waypoints.
- The handler must be capable of interpreting the canine's behavior and reacting accordingly (e.g., ability to recognize and follow-up on alerts).
- The canine must locate the subject within the specified time limit.
- The canine must range at a distance appropriate for the wind, temperature, and terrain conditions while maintaining adequate contact with its handler.
- The canine must demonstrate long range detection appropriate for the conditions and the persistence to work the scent from the initial detection of target odor to the point of source (the subject).
- The canine must eagerly engage in, and remain focused on the task of locating the subject without being unduly distracted or losing interest.
- The canine must locate the subject with minimal assistance from the handler and willingly leave both the trail and the handler in order to gain access to the subject.
- The canine must demonstrate a favorable reaction to a stranger and approach the subject with little or no encouragement.

- The canine must demonstrate its trained indication when it locates the subject.
- The canine must eagerly engage the subject for its reward.
- The canine must demonstrate appropriate behavior towards the subject (e.g., the canine does nothing that may injure the subject).
- The handler must complete a hand-drawn map after the completion of each assigned task. The map should include all pertinent information: name of handler, name of canine, date, north arrow, wind direction and speed, start point and time, end point and time, PLS (if in sector), POD, terrain and prominent features, the path of travel (track), location of alerts, indications, and the subject.
- Handler is able to relate pertinent information during debriefing.

### **Non-Critical Elements**

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The following elements are not required in this assessment and do not affect the successful completion, but if applicable to the scenario and if performed, they will be assessed as a courtesy to the handler to indicate areas of strength and weakness.

- The handler is to actively look for clues. If encountered, clues are to be marked and communicated accordingly.
- Appropriate use of communication protocol. This element includes the handler's understanding of when to initiate communication and relay pertinent information.

### **Light Brush**

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#### **Objective**

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Observation of the handler's ability to effectively plan and execute a search of a small area consisting of light brush as well as the canine's ability to maintain focus for an extended period of time on the task of locating a missing subject.

#### **Setup**

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An area 40 to 80 acres in size in which at least 80% of the total area consists of ground cover and/or vegetation which can moderately inhibit airflow.

## Guidelines

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- One (1) subject shall be placed in an area of light brush anywhere within the search area.
- The duration of the assessment may not exceed four (4) hours.
- At least 1 boundary of the search area shall not be defined by an obvious man-made or natural terrain feature (e.g., roads, trails, creeks, power line, etc.).
- The subject may not have a reward of any type.
- There will be at least 2 but no more than 3 clues placed within the search area.  
**Note:** It is not a failure of the assessment if the clues are not located.
- This assessment may contain either a simulated medical emergency or crime scene but may not contain both.
- The canine must make the find with minimal assistance from the handler and no assistance from the subject.
- The canine team must be actively searching for at least 80 minutes in order to demonstrate the canine's ability to concentrate on the task at hand without being unduly distracted or losing interest.

## Critical Elements

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The following elements must be met at a satisfactory level in order to successfully complete this assessment:

- The handler must demonstrate the knowledge and ability to determine wind, temperature, and terrain conditions and how this relates to the planning and execution of their search strategy.
- The handler must thoroughly and systematically cover the assigned search area.
- Handler navigations skills. Uses map and compass to get to and stay in the assigned search area, can determine location via UTM/USNG coordinates, can use GPS to track path of travel and mark waypoints.
- The handler must be capable of interpreting the canine's behavior and reacting accordingly (e.g., ability to recognize and follow-up on alerts).
- The canine must locate the subject within the specified time limit.

- The canine must range at a distance appropriate for the wind, temperature, and terrain conditions while maintaining adequate contact with its handler.
- The canine must demonstrate long range detection appropriate for the conditions and the persistence to work the scent from the initial detection of target odor to the point of source (the subject).
- The canine must eagerly engage in, and remain focused on the task of locating the subject without being unduly distracted or losing interest.
- The canine must locate the subject with minimal assistance from the handler and willingly leave the handler in order to gain access to the subject.
- The canine must demonstrate a favorable reaction to a stranger and approach the subject with little or no encouragement.
- The canine must demonstrate its trained indication when it locates the subject.
- The canine must eagerly engage the subject for its reward.
- The canine must demonstrate appropriate behavior towards the subject (e.g., the canine does nothing that may injure the subject).
- The handler must complete a hand-drawn map after the completion of each assigned task. The map should include all pertinent information: name of handler, name of canine, date, north arrow, wind direction and speed, start point and time, end point and time, PLS (if in sector), POD, terrain and prominent features, the path of travel (track), location of alerts, indications, and the subject.
- Handler is able to relate pertinent information during debriefing.

### **Non-Critical Elements**

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The following elements are not required in this assessment and do not affect the successful completion, but if applicable to the scenario and if performed, they will be assessed as a courtesy to the handler to indicate areas of strength and weakness.

- Appropriate use of communication protocol. This element includes the handler's understanding of when to initiate communication and relay pertinent information.
- The handler is to actively look for clues. If encountered, clues are to be marked and communicated accordingly.

- The handler must use a systematic method to mark boundaries, alerts, and clues (e.g., flagging tape, light sticks, GPS).
- The handler must take appropriate action when faced with either a simulated medical emergency or crime scene.

## Dense Brush

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### **Objective**

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Observation of the physical capabilities and adroitness of the team when presented with an area of dense ground cover. The handler's navigation skills and the canine's willingness to work in and forge through dense brush to locate the subject will also be assessed.

### **Setup**

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An area 20 to 40 acres in size in which at least 60% of the total area consists of ground cover and/or vegetation which can significantly inhibit airflow. Ideally some areas should be impenetrable so that the handler must maneuver around them.

### **Guidelines**

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- One subject shall be placed within an area of dense brush anywhere in the search area.
- The duration of this problem may not exceed 4 hours.
- The subject may not have a reward of any type.
- This assessment may contain either a simulated medical emergency or crime scene but may not contain both.
- The handler will be provided a radio and will be expected to appropriately initiate and respond to communications.
- The canine must make the find with minimal assistance from the handler and no assistance from the subject.
- The canine team must be actively searching for at least 80 minutes in order to demonstrate the canine's ability to concentrate on the task at hand without being unduly distracted or losing interest.

## Critical Elements

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The following elements must be met at a satisfactory level in order to successfully complete this assessment:

- The handler must demonstrate the knowledge and ability to determine wind, temperature, and terrain conditions and how this relates to the planning and execution of their search strategy.
- The handler must thoroughly and systematically cover the assigned search area.
- The handler must demonstrate the ability to maneuver around obstacles or impenetrable brush while maintaining a systematic search pattern.
- Handler navigations skills. Uses map and compass to get to and stay in the assigned search area, can determine location via UTM/USNG coordinates, can use GPS to track path of travel and mark waypoints.
- Appropriate use of communication protocol. This element includes the handler's understanding of when to initiate communication and relay pertinent information.
- The handler must use a systematic method to mark boundaries, alerts, and clues (e.g., flagging tape, light sticks, GPS).
- The handler must be capable of interpreting the canine's behavior and reacting accordingly (e.g., ability to recognize and follow-up on alerts).
- The canine must locate the subject within the specified time limit.
- The canine must range at a distance appropriate for the wind, temperature, and terrain conditions while maintaining adequate contact with its handler.
- The canine must demonstrate long range detection appropriate for the conditions and the persistence to work the scent from the initial detection of target odor to the point of source (the subject).
- The canine must eagerly engage in, and remain focused on the task of locating the subject without being unduly distracted or losing interest.
- The canine must demonstrate a willingness to penetrate dense brush to locate and access the subject.
- The canine must make the find with minimal assistance from the handler and no assistance from the subject.

- The canine must demonstrate a favorable reaction to a stranger and approach the subject with little or no encouragement.
- The canine must demonstrate its trained indication when it locates the subject.
- The canine must eagerly engage the subject for its reward.
- The canine must demonstrate appropriate behavior towards the subject (e.g., the canine does nothing that may injure the subject).
- The handler must complete a hand-drawn map after the completion of each assigned task. The map should include all pertinent information: name of handler, name of canine, date, north arrow, wind direction and speed, start point and time, end point and time, PLS (if in sector), POD, terrain and prominent features, the path of travel (track), location of alerts, indications, and the subject.
- Handler is able to relate pertinent information during debriefing.

### **Non-Critical Elements**

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The following element is not required in this assessment and does not affect the successful completion, but if applicable to the scenario and if performed, will be assessed as a courtesy to the handler to indicate areas of strength and weakness.

- The handler must take appropriate action when faced with either a simulated medical emergency or crime scene.

### **Night**

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### **Objective**

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Observation of the handler's and canine's ability to perform an area search in the dark. The handler's land navigation skills and ability to effectively plan and execute a search in the dark will also be assessed.

### **Setup**

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An area 40 to 80 acres in size in which approximately 80% of the total area consists of ground cover and/or vegetation which can moderately inhibit airflow.

## Guidelines

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- The assessment will be conducted by at least 2 rostered ARDA evaluators.
- The field portion of this assessment shall not begin until after sunset.
- One subject shall be placed in an area of light brush anywhere within the search area.
- The duration of the assessment may not exceed four (4) hours.
- At least 1 boundary of the search area shall not be defined by an obvious man-made or natural terrain feature (e.g., roads, trails, creeks, power line, etc.).
- The subject may not have a reward of any type.
- This assessment may contain either a simulated medical emergency or crime scene but may not contain both.
- The handler will be provided a radio and will be expected to appropriately initiate and respond to communications.
- The canine must make the find with minimal assistance from the handler and no assistance from the subject.
- The canine team must be actively searching for at least 80 minutes in order to demonstrate the canine's ability to concentrate on the task at hand without being unduly distracted or losing interest.

## Critical Elements

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The following elements must be met at a satisfactory level in order to successfully complete this assessment:

- The handler must demonstrate the knowledge and ability to determine wind, temperature, and terrain conditions and how this relates specifically to the planning and execution of a search strategy in nighttime conditions.
- The handler must thoroughly and systematically cover the assigned search area.
- The handler must demonstrate ability to navigate at night to include: usage of map and compass to get to and stay in the assigned search area, ability to determine location via UTM/USNG coordinates, and use GPS to track path of travel and mark waypoints.

- Appropriate use of communication protocol. This element includes the handler's understanding of when to initiate communication and relay pertinent information.
- The handler must use a systematic method to mark boundaries, alerts, and clues (e.g., flagging tape, light sticks, GPS).
- The handler must be capable of interpreting the canine's behavior and reacting accordingly (e.g., ability to recognize and follow-up on alerts).
- The handler must complete a hand-drawn map after the completion of each assigned task. The map should include all pertinent information: name of handler, name of canine, date, north arrow, wind direction and speed, start point and time, end point and time, PLS (if in sector), POD, terrain and prominent features, the path of travel (track), location of alerts, indications, and the subject.
- Handler is able to relate pertinent information during debriefing.
- The canine must locate the subject within the specified time limit.
- The canine must range at a distance appropriate for the wind, temperature, terrain, and nighttime conditions while maintaining adequate contact with its handler.
- The canine must demonstrate long range detection appropriate for the conditions and the persistence to work the scent from the initial detection of target odor to the point of source (the subject).
- The canine must eagerly engage in, and remain focused on the task of locating the subject without being unduly distracted or losing interest.
- The canine must make the find with minimal assistance from the handler and no assistance from the subject.
- The canine must demonstrate a favorable reaction to a stranger and approach the subject with little or no encouragement.
- The canine must demonstrate its trained indication when it locates the subject.
- The canine must eagerly engage the subject for its reward.
- The canine must demonstrate appropriate behavior towards the subject (e.g., the canine does nothing that may injure the subject).

## Non-Critical Elements

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The following elements are not required in this assessment and do not affect the successful completion, but if applicable to the scenario and if performed, they will be assessed as a courtesy to the handler to indicate areas of strength and weakness.

- The handler must take appropriate action when faced with a simulated medical emergency or crime scene.

## Area Search Certification Evaluation

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### Objective

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The purpose of the Area Search Certification Evaluation is to accurately and uniformly assess the evaluation candidate's ability to perform the skills necessary to locate missing persons in a wilderness, suburban or rural environments.

### Setup

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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., 80 to 160 acres). It is the responsibility of the evaluators to determine the size of the search area based on the terrain, season and weather conditions and to ensure that the total size of the search area is such that it presents a challenge to the team and can be reasonably searched within the acceptable timeframe.

### Guidelines

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- In order to be eligible to participate in the Area Search Certification Evaluation, the evaluation candidate must have completed:
  - Minimum requirements as stated in Section I: Ground Rules and Minimum Requirements.
  - Basic field assessments
- The evaluation will be conducted by at least 2 rostered ARDA evaluators.
- There will be at least 2 but no more than 4 subjects placed within the search area. The subjects will be placed a minimum of 30 minutes prior to the start of the evaluation.

- The subject may not have a reward of any type.
- The duration of the evaluation must last at least 4 hours and may not exceed 8 hours.
- The evaluators will conduct a brief uniform and equipment check of the team before the start of 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 handler is expected to ask pertinent questions during the briefing.
- The evaluators will provide the handler with a topographic map of the search area and assign the handler one or more tasks. The evaluators will accompany the team on its task(s) and observe their performance and may or may not provide additional information and tasking as the search progresses.
- The handler will be provided a radio and will be expected to appropriately initiate and respond to communications.
- Time will start when the handler receives their initial briefing. The handler must leave to start their task in no more than 30 minutes from the end of the briefing process.
- 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.
- There will be at least 2 but no more than 3 clues placed within the search area.  
**Note:** It is not a failure of the evaluation if the clues are not located.
- The evaluation will contain both a simulated medical emergency and a crime scene.
- At the conclusion of the field portion(s) of the evaluation, the evaluators will debrief the handler. 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. The evaluation time will end at the conclusion of the debrief.
- At the conclusion of the evaluation, both evaluators are responsible for completing the appropriate evaluation forms and for reviewing the team's performance with

the handler. 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.

- Upon the successful completion of the Area Search Certification Evaluation, the Canine Search Specialist Team will receive a certificate of completion which will be valid for two (2) years.

## Critical Elements

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The following elements must be met at a satisfactory level in order to successfully complete this evaluation:

- The handler must demonstrate the knowledge and ability to determine wind, temperature, and terrain conditions and how this relates to the planning and execution of their search strategy.
- The handler must thoroughly and systematically cover the assigned search area within the specified time limit with no significant gaps (e.g., areas inadequately covered by the canine team). **Note:** Exception will be given to any areas that are not safe to search. If this occurs, the handler is to mark the area(s) on their map and be prepared to explain this omission during their debrief.
- Handler navigations skills. Uses map and compass to get to and stay in the assigned search area, can determine location via UTM/USNG coordinates, can use GPS to track path of travel and mark waypoints.
- Appropriate use of communication protocol. This element includes the handler's understanding of when to initiate communication and relay pertinent information.
- The handler must use a systematic method to mark boundaries, alerts, and clues (e.g., flagging tape, light sticks, GPS).
- The handler must take appropriate action when faced with either a simulated medical emergency or crime scene.
- The handler must be capable of interpreting the canine's behavior and reacting accordingly (e.g., ability to recognize and follow-up on alerts).
- The handler must exhibit team leadership skills by taking proper care of themselves, his canine, and any persons escorting the team. This includes:
  - Ensuring humans and canine stay properly hydrated

- Ensuring that neither humans nor canine become dangerously overheated or cold
- Taking appropriate breaks
- The handler must complete a hand-drawn map after the completion of each assigned task. The map should include all pertinent information: name of handler, name of canine, date, north arrow, wind direction and speed, start point and time, end point and time, PLS (if in sector), POD, terrain and prominent features, the path of travel (track), location of alerts, indications, and the subject.
- Handler is able to relate pertinent information during debriefing.
- 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 team must demonstrate an appropriate working stamina and pace for the duration of the field evaluation.
- The team must locate all subjects within the specified time limit.
- The canine must range at a distance appropriate for the wind, temperature, and terrain conditions while maintaining adequate contact with its handler.
- The canine must demonstrate long range detection appropriate for the conditions and the persistence to work the scent from the initial detection to the point of source.
- The canine must eagerly engage in, and remain focused on the task of locating the subject without being unduly distracted or losing interest.
- The canine must make the find with minimal assistance from the handler and no assistance from the subject.
- The canine must demonstrate a favorable reaction to a stranger and approach the subjects with little or no encouragement.
- The canine must demonstrate its trained indication when it locates the subject.
- The canine must eagerly accept its reward.
- The canine must demonstrate appropriate behavior towards the subject (e.g., the canine does nothing that may injure the subject).
- The canine must demonstrate the ability and willingness to return to work, after making a find, and focus on locating additional subjects.

# Area Search Recertification Evaluation

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## Objective

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The purpose of the Area Search Recertification Evaluation is to accurately and uniformly assess that the Canine Search Specialist Team has retained its ability to perform the skills necessary to locate missing persons in a wilderness, suburban or rural environments.

## Setup

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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., 40 to 80 acres). It is the responsibility of the evaluators to determine the size of the search area based on the terrain, season and weather conditions and to ensure that the total size of the search area is such that it presents a challenge to the team and can be reasonably searched within the acceptable timeframe.

## Guidelines

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- In order to be eligible to participate in the Area Search Certification Evaluation, the evaluation candidate must have completed:
  - Minimum requirements as stated in Section I: Ground Rules and Minimum Requirements.
  - The obedience and agility assessments must be successfully completed no more than 6 months prior to this recertification.
- The evaluation will be conducted by at least 1 rostered ARDA evaluator.
- There will be at least 1 but no more than 2 subjects placed within the search area. The subjects will be placed a minimum of 30 minutes prior to the start of the evaluation.
- The subject may not have a reward of any type.
- The duration of the evaluation must last at least 1 hour and may not exceed 4 hours.
- The evaluator will conduct a brief uniform and equipment check of the team before the start of 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 evaluator will conduct a briefing in which the handler will be given pertinent information about the search scenario. The handler is expected to ask pertinent questions during the briefing.
- The evaluator will provide the handler with a topographic map of the search area and assign the handler one or more tasks. The evaluator will accompany the team on its task(s) and observe their performance and may or may not provide additional information and tasking as the search progresses.
- The handler will be provided a radio and will be expected to appropriately initiate and respond to communications.
- Time will start when the handler receives their initial briefing. The handler must leave to start their task in no more than 30 minutes from the end of the briefing process.
- Prior to starting their search task(s), the handler is required to communicate to the evaluator 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.
- There will be at least 1 but no more than 2 clues placed within the search area.  
**Note:** It is not a failure of the evaluation if the clues are not located.
- The evaluation will contain either a simulated medical emergency or crime scene.
- At the conclusion of the field portion(s) of the evaluation, the evaluator will debrief the handler. 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. The evaluation time will end at the conclusion of the debrief.
- At the conclusion of the evaluation, the evaluator is responsible for completing the appropriate evaluation forms and for reviewing the team's performance with the handler. The evaluator 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.

- Upon the successful completion of the Area Search Recertification Evaluation, the Canine Search Specialist Team will receive a certificate of completion which will be valid for two (2) years.

## Critical Elements

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The following elements must be met at a satisfactory level in order to successfully complete this evaluation:

- The handler must demonstrate the knowledge and ability to determine wind, temperature, and terrain conditions and how this relates to the planning and execution of their search strategy.
- The handler must thoroughly and systematically cover the assigned search area within the specified time limit with no significant gaps (e.g., areas inadequately covered by the canine team). **Note:** Exception will be given to any areas that are not safe to search. If this occurs, the handler is to mark the area(s) on their map and be prepared to explain this omission during their debrief.
- Handler navigations skills. Uses map and compass to get to and stay in the assigned search area, can determine location via UTM/USNG coordinates, can use GPS to track path of travel and mark waypoints.
- Appropriate use of communication protocol. This element includes the handler's understanding of when to initiate communication and relay pertinent information.
- The handler must use a systematic method to mark boundaries, alerts, and clues (e.g., flagging tape, light sticks, GPS).
- The handler must take appropriate action when faced with either a simulated medical emergency or crime scene.
- The handler must be capable of interpreting the canine's behavior and reacting accordingly (e.g., ability to recognize and follow-up on alerts).
- The handler must exhibit team leadership skills by taking proper care of themselves, his canine, and any persons escorting the team. This includes:
  - Ensuring humans and canine stay properly hydrated
  - Ensuring that neither humans nor canine become dangerously overheated or cold
  - Taking appropriate breaks

- The handler must complete a hand-drawn map after the completion of each assigned task. The map should include all pertinent information: name of handler, name of canine, date, north arrow, wind direction and speed, start point and time, end point and time, PLS (if in sector), POD, terrain and prominent features, the path of travel (track), location of alerts, indications, and the subject.
- Handler is able to relate pertinent information during debriefing.
- 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 team must demonstrate an appropriate working stamina and pace for the duration of the field evaluation.
- The team must locate all subjects within the specified time limit.
- The canine must range at a distance appropriate for the wind, temperature, and terrain conditions while maintaining adequate contact with its handler.
- The canine must demonstrate long range detection appropriate for the conditions and the persistence to work the scent from the initial detection to the point of source.
- The canine must eagerly engage in, and remain focused on the task of locating the subject without being unduly distracted or losing interest.
- The canine must make the find with minimal assistance from the handler and no assistance from the subject.
- The canine must demonstrate a favorable reaction to a stranger and approach the subjects with little or no encouragement.
- The canine must demonstrate its trained indication when it locates the subject.
- The canine must eagerly accept its reward.
- The canine must demonstrate appropriate behavior towards the subject (e.g., the canine does nothing that may injure the subject).
- The canine must demonstrate the ability and willingness to return to work, after making a find, and focus on locating additional subjects.