

# American Rescue Dog Association



## Standards and Certification Procedures

# American Rescue Dog Association



## Section I – Ground Rules and Minimum Requirements

May 2011

# Table of Contents

---

Introduction.....	1
Ground Rules and Minimum Requirements.....	2
Ground Rules.....	2
Minimum Requirements - Evaluation Candidate.....	3
<b>National Incident Management System (NIMS) .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Medical Skills.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Basic Field Skills and Search and Rescue Knowledge .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Land Navigation .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Equipment.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Minimum Requirements - Canine.....	8
<b>Obedience Assessment.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Agility Assessment .....</b>	<b>10</b>



# Introduction

---

The purpose of this document is to describe the minimum standards and certification procedures that apply to each discipline outlined in this document. These standards and procedures are meant to provide standardization and consistency within the wide array of disciplines that comprise canine search and rescue. The American Rescue Dog Association (ARDA) has established standards that apply to individual canine search specialist teams, search management personnel, and canine search and rescue/recovery units. Each individual in an ARDA member unit is required to meet the minimum requirements as described in this document to be considered operational in a specific discipline(s).

# Ground Rules and Minimum Requirements

---

This section outlines both the ground rules and minimum requirements that an individual must meet prior to requesting any certification evaluation contained in this document.

## Ground Rules

---

The following ground rules apply to all certification evaluations:

- The evaluation candidate must be at least 18 years of age.
- The evaluation candidate must be in good physical condition and may not possess any physical or mental handicaps, limitations, or conditions that would preclude their safe performance conducting the function(s) for which they have been trained.
- Verbal and/or physical abuse towards the evaluators or the subjects is not permitted at any time.
- The evaluation candidate is required to be dressed in uniform and have the required equipment for the discipline in which they are seeking certification. If the candidate is lacking any important clothing or equipment that renders them ineffective or unsafe in the field, the evaluation will be terminated immediately.
- All certification evaluations will be conducted by a minimum of two (2) rostered ARDA evaluators.

The following ground rules apply to all canine certification evaluations:

- The canine must be at least 18 months of age.
- The canine must have current inoculations for rabies and distemper and the handler must be prepared to provide a current shot record for their canine.
- The canine must be in good physical condition and may not possess any physical handicaps, limitations, or conditions that would preclude its safe performance conducting the function(s) for which it has been trained.
- Verbal and/or physical abuse of the canine is not permitted at any time.
- Canine aggression, which is defined as unprovoked aggressive behavior towards other canines or people, is not permitted at any time.
- Prong or choke collars are not permitted during any assessment or certification evaluation.

- The handler is responsible for the safety and control of his canine.

## Minimum Requirements – Evaluation Candidate

---

This section describes the minimum requirements that an evaluation candidate must meet to be eligible to request a certification evaluation.

## National Incident Management System (NIMS)

---

### Objective

---

To ensure that all deployable individuals have met the minimum criteria in order to integrate into the National Incident Management System (NIMS). NIMS was developed so responders from different jurisdictions and disciplines can work together better to respond to natural disasters and emergencies, including acts of terrorism. Each certification evaluation contained in this document meets or exceeds the minimum requirements as stated in the NIMS Resource Typing and Credentialing Documents. The most recent version of these documents can be found at, [http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/508-8\\_search\\_and\\_rescue\\_resources.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/508-8_search_and_rescue_resources.pdf), and [http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/sar\\_jobtitle\\_111806.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/sar_jobtitle_111806.pdf) respectively.

### Criteria

---

- ICS-100: Introduction to ICS
- ICS-200: Basic ICS
- IS-700: National Incident Management System (NIMS), An Introduction
- IS-800: National Response Framework, An Introduction
- IS-809: Emergency Support Function (ESF) #9 - Search and Rescue

**Note:** Courses can be completed online - <http://training.fema.gov/IS/NIMS.asp>

## Medical Skills

---

### **Objective**

---

In order to provide initial treatment or support to an injured person, all deployable individuals must demonstrate competency in the application of general first aid practices and CPR.

### **Criteria**

---

- American Heart Association Heartsaver First Aid Course (approximately 3.5 hours) or equivalent.
- American Heart Association Heartsaver AED (approximately 3.5 hours includes Adult/Child CPR with mask and choking and Adult/Child AED) or equivalent.

## Basic Field Skills and Search and Rescue Knowledge

---

### **Objective**

---

In order to be able to function competently on a mission that could involve multiple agencies and responding organizations, all deployable individuals must possess applicable knowledge regarding general search and rescue terminology, practices, and procedures.

### **Criteria**

---

See Appendix B for a list of courses that satisfy this criteria.

## Land Navigation

---

### **Objective**

---

To ensure that all deployable individuals are competent in the use of a topographic map, applicable coordinate systems, magnetic compass, and Global Positioning System (GPS).

## Setup

---

The area selected for the assessment should contain the terrain features necessary to satisfy the criteria listed below. This can typically be accomplished by choosing an area of approximately 40 acres in size.

## Criteria

---

The ARDA land navigation assessment process consists of both a written and practical assessment. A passing score on the written assessment is required prior to attempting the practical assessment.

### Written Assessment

---

1. Magnetic compass
  - a. Parts and functions
  - b. Declination
  - c. Headings
2. Map
  - a. Contour lines
  - b. Color
  - c. Symbols
  - d. Coordinate systems (e.g., UTM, USNG, lat/long)
  - e. Orienting
  - f. Legend
3. Map and compass skills
  - a. Declination
  - b. Headings
  - c. Triangulation
  - d. Pace counting
4. Global Positioning System (GPS)
  - a. Settings (Datum, coordinate systems, etc.)
  - b. Set and retrieve tracks and waypoints
  - c. Translate position

## Practical Assessment

---

1. Plot/read position on a topographic map – The individual must be able to both plot and read a given position on the map using either the UTM or USNG coordinate system and triangulation.
2. Use of a magnetic compass – The individual must be able to use a magnetic compass to plot and follow an azimuth to a specified point and must also have an understanding of how to correct for magnetic variance.
3. Recognize terrain features depicted on a topographic map – The individual is able to recognize terrain features depicted on a topographic map (e.g., creeks, hilltops, drainages, etc.).
4. Recognize map symbols – The individual is able to recognize map symbols depicted on a topographic map (e.g., buildings, roads, power lines, etc.).
5. Use of pace count – The individual must know their pace count for 100 meters and be able to demonstrate an understanding of how to apply this knowledge in the field.
6. Plot and follow a search grid pattern – The individual will be assigned a small sector (e.g., no more than 20 acres) with at least 3 well defined boundaries (e.g., road, creek, etc). Coverage of the entire area is not mandatory, however, the individual must complete enough of the task for the evaluator to observe and verify that the individual has an understanding of how to plot a grid pattern for a canine task, and follow the pattern in evenly spaced grids.
7. Working knowledge and use of a GPS device – The individual must demonstrate general knowledge and ability to use a GPS device to: verify that the correct datum is set, set and retrieve a track, mark and retrieve a waypoint, and read coordinates from a GPS, translate position verbally, and plot on a topographic map.

## Guidelines

---

### Written Assessment

- Must be completed in no more than 1.5 hours and will be administered by 1 rostered ARDA evaluator. A score of at least 75% is required to pass this portion of the assessment.
- The use of a magnetic compass is required for a portion of this assessment and must be supplied by the individual being assessed.

## **Practical Assessment**

- Cannot be completed until the written assessment has been successfully completed.
- Must be completed in no more than 3 hours and will be administered by 1 rostered ARDA evaluator.
- The use of a topographic map is required and will be supplied by the evaluator. If asked, the evaluator will indicate the location of the starting point.
- The use of a magnetic compass is required for this assessment and must be supplied by the individual being assessed.
- The use of a GPS device is required for a portion of this assessment and will be supplied by the evaluator if necessary.
- Successful completion of the assessment is accomplished with a passing score of each assessed element. If no more than 2 elements are failed, those elements that were failed may be retested within 3 months. If more than 2 elements are failed, more than 3 months has elapsed, or an individual fails either element upon re-assessment, the assessment must be retaken in its entirety.

## Equipment

---

### **Objective**

---

To ensure that all deployable individuals have in their possession the minimal clothing and equipment needed to safely deploy on a search mission.

### **Criteria**

---

Each evaluation candidate must successfully complete an inspection of his uniform, field pack, and personal pack. Search management evaluation candidates are not required to have a field pack. This inspection must be conducted by at least 1 rostered ARDA evaluator.

The minimum requirements for both field and personal packs are stipulated in Appendix C.

## Minimum Requirements - Canine

---

This section describes the minimum requirements that a canine must successfully complete prior to attempting any certification evaluation.

### Obedience Assessment

---

#### Objective

---

The purpose of the obedience assessment is to ensure that the canine is reliably obedient to the handler and other search team members under conditions similar to those likely to be encountered at a search scene. The canine should perform at a level of manageability sufficient to ensure the safety of the canine, handler, and bystanders.

#### Setup

---

The minimum size of the area for the assessment shall be no less than 120 feet by 75 feet. The area should not contain any hazards or distractions to the canine.

#### Criteria

---

1. People Acceptance and Response to Another Handler – The handler will “tie out” the canine (e.g., tie one end of the lead to a fence, a tree, etc.) and leave it in view of the evaluators. The handler will proceed to a designated area out of the canine’s sight. After being out of sight of the handler for a period of 1 minute, a team member (not family member), will un-tie the canine and return it to its handler. The canine does not have to be in “perfect” heel position, however, it should be able to walk back to the handler in a controlled manner without excessive forging or lagging.
2. Canine Aggression – Two posts, each consisting of a handler with canine, sitting quietly on lead in heel position, will be placed approximately 8 feet apart facing each other. A third handler with his canine on lead, will complete a figure 8 pattern, passing within two (2) feet of each of the posts, then complete a second figure 8 pattern in the reverse direction. Next, the handler will switch places with one of the post teams and each post team will complete the pattern in the same manner. The canine(s) being evaluated must remain under control of his handler and display no overt aggression. For the test to be fair, the canines acting as posts must also remain under control and display no overt aggression to each other or the canine being evaluated.

3. Heeling in a Crowd – The handler will heel the canine, on a “loose” lead, through a scattered group of at least four (4) milling people. On command “forward” the handler will command the canine to heel. The canine will walk next to the handler and maintain its position at either side of the handler so as to be attentive to the handler and under his control. At the command “halt” the handler will stop and the canine will sit. The heeling exercise will include right and left turns, about turns, fast, slow, and normal pace. The handler should have the canine’s attention at all times and additional or repetitive commands are acceptable.
4. Stop on Recall - The canine shall be placed in a stay command 75 feet (25 meters) from the handler. Upon direction from the evaluator, the handler will call their canine. The handler will stop the canine when directed by the evaluator. Once the stop command has been given, an immediate change in gait is required and the canine must then come to a stop. The canine may drop, sit, or stand and will be judged by the quickness of its response. The handlers may give multiple commands. The canine shall remain stationary until released or recalled by the handler at the direction of the evaluator.
5. Emergency Stop – The canine will be sent out free to roam. Once the canine is approximately 75 feet (25 meters) away from the handler the evaluator will command the handler to stop the canine. Once the stop command has been given, an immediate change in gait is required and the canine must then come to a stop. The canine may sit, down, stand, etc.
6. Vehicle Behavior – A minimum of 2 and maximum of 4 canine/handler teams will get into the open bed of a pickup truck or equivalent and remain there for 2 minutes. The canine will remain under the handler’s control and make no aggressive moves towards another canine or person. The canine’s behavior will be assessed and deemed acceptable or unacceptable by the evaluator.
7. High Jump - On command the canine will jump into back of pick-up truck or equivalent (approximate height 36 inches).
8. Confinement – The canine will be put with the handler in a very confined space, such as the floor of the front seat of a car for a period of time long enough for the evaluator to determine whether the canine exhibits acceptable behavior in a confined situation.
9. Long Wait – A minimum of 3 canines will be placed 5 feet apart from each other and their leads must be removed. Upon direction from the evaluator, handlers shall give their canine the wait command and will then proceed to a designated area out of the canine’s sight. The canine must be under the supervision of a monitor (may be either the evaluator or a teammate that is not part of the exercise). The monitor is permitted to repeat the “wait” command to any canine during the exercise. Time starts when the evaluator states “leave the canine”. The canine may sit, stand or shift position, but shall not move more than a body length in any direction from where the canine was placed until the handler

returns to the canine. After five (5) minutes, the evaluator will direct the handlers to return to the canines. Handlers may give a verbal or a hand signal the canines to stay, if needed, while returning. The exercise is complete when all handlers have returned to their canines and the evaluator states “exercise complete”. No release will be allowed by any team until the “exercise complete” command is issued.

The evaluator should take into consideration the comfort of the canine (e.g., do not choose a place that is too hot, on anthills, etc.). An effort should be made to set up the exercise so the handlers walk away from the dogs from the front as opposed to going behind the dogs. If a dog breaks the down or becomes overly disruptive it may be removed from the exercise.

## **Guidelines**

---

- All obedience elements must be completed on the same day.
- A failure of more than one element will require that the team re-take the entire assessment. If the team fails only one element, that element may be reassessed within 2 months. If the element is failed a second time, the entire assessment must be completed in its entirety.

## **Agility Assessment**

---

### **Objective**

---

In order to negotiate potential abnormal/adverse conditions that may be encountered on a search mission, the canine must have specific skills and overcome some of its natural instincts. The canine should be able to approach such conditions in a calm and controlled manner and negotiate obstacles without physical aide from its handler.

### **Setup**

---

It is recommended that the agility elements are all located within close proximity (walking distance). While the elements may be constructed for the purpose of the evaluation the evaluators may also use obstacles that exist in the environment (e.g., an unsteady wood pile, a bench in a park, etc.).

### **Criteria**

---

1. Tunnel – A dark, narrow tunnel/passageway containing at least one right angle turn. The canine should not be able to see through the tunnel to the end.

Partial covering of the exit is permitted. The canine should fit into the tunnel without crawling.

2. Unpleasant Surface – A surface that is unpleasant for the dog to walk on (e.g., grating, chain-link fence, aluminum siding/roofing, tile floor, etc.). The surface should be at least 6 feet long and 2 feet wide.
3. Plank – A stable plank no less than 10 inches wide, 8 feet long and at least 2 feet but no more than 4 feet off the ground.
4. Unstable Surface – The surface can be a mix of obstacles but must wobble under the canine when walked on. The surface will be no more than 3 feet off the ground.
5. Open Stairs – A flight of at least 10 open stairs such as those found on a wooden deck, fire escape, etc. The canine must climb up and go down the stairs. The canine can either be on or off lead and the handler can walk with the canine but may not precede it.

### **Evaluation Guidelines**

---

- The canine will work off lead on all elements with the exception of the open stairs.
- All agility elements must be successfully completed on the same day.
- The handler must not precede the canine on the obstacle nor teach the obstacle during the evaluation.