UPWDA Search and Rescue Dog Certification – Live Find Air Scent

General Requirements:

This certification will be open to any UPWDA member that is a civilian or Police, Fire, Emergency management canine handler that wishes to become a certified SAR K9 team.

- The testing site should be new to both the K9 and the handler.

- The victim(s) must be unknown to K9.

Handler Requirements

1. Scenario Briefing & Strategy

- A simulated search scenario will be presented by the evaluator.

- Before beginning the search, the handler must:

  • Demonstrate understanding of the assignment

  • Describe a clear operational strategy, including:

    - Initial search plan

    - Terrain assessment

    - Wind and scent considerations

    - Safety planning

    - Interpretation and marking of K9 alerts

2. Use of the K9

- All victim locations must be determined with the assistance of the K9.

- Acceptable indications include:

  • Direct approach/contact with the victim

- Recognized alerts that allow the handler to identify the victim's location

- Disallowed:

- A handler visually locating the victim without K9 assistance—this find will not count.

Canine Requirements

1. Canine Sociability Toward People and Dogs

- The K9 must demonstrate appropriate social behavior around other non-aggressive dogs.

- The dog should show:

- Comfort with new people

- Comfort in unfamiliar environments

- Confidence with new stimuli such as terrain, sounds, obstacles, and human interactions

- Excessive fear, reactivity, or aggression toward people or dogs is grounds for failure.

2. Search Performance Standards

- The K9 must show:

- Strong hunting and air-scenting behavior

- Independence while remaining responsive to handler direction

- Clear and recognizable alert behavior

- Focus, stamina, and ability to work for extended periods

Testing Parameters

- Minimum Search Area: 40 acres

- Minimum Victim Set Time: 1 hour

- Victim scenarios may include:

Note: The exact scenario for the testing shall be determined by a random number selected by a number generator.

Victim scenarios may include:

1. Single victim
2. Multiple victims (maximum of 2)
3. Concealed victim
4. Elevated victim (up to 6 ft)
5. Moving victim

Operational Control/Obedience:

1. Off lead recall: minimum 25 yards
   (Note: This will be performed while the dog is running free. Upon direction from the evaluator the handler will recall the dog and place the dog in a sit or down position.)

2. Stay with handler in sight: 2 minutes, minimum distance of 25 feet.
   (Note: This will be performed while the handler is receiving their briefing for the testing scenario.)

3. Sit and down – off lead

4. Out/let go of the dog's toy