Communications for SAR Dog Handlers

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Kitsap County Search Dogs
Can you hear us now?
If you could, would it matter?

- Voice Check
- Alert
- Trained Indication
- Trained Final Response
- PLS
- Toy Drive

- Death Code
- Re-find
- Scent Article
- Trailing Dog
- Air Scent Dog
- Cleared the area

And what’s this about a Party?!
Types of Search Dogs

- **Air Scent Dog**
  - Testing Standard: Find two humans in 80 acres in two hours.
  - Normally used in wilderness.

- **Trailing Dog**
  - Find a specific human by using a scent article and following their trail.
  - Testing Standards: 4 - 24 hour old trail, one mile, variable surface, six turns.
  - Usually in urban areas, frequently dementia patients.

- **Cadaver Dogs**
  - Large Source. Testing Standard: 5lbs of human remains.
  - Forensic Level. Testing Standard: 1cc of blood.
What breed of dog?

- Almost all breeds can use their nose.
- SAR dogs need to be smart and sturdy.
- Key element is toy drive.
  - They have to really want the toy.
- Mixed breeds do fine.
- *Breaking News: The human is the harder half of the team to train.*
Air Scent Dogs

- Work off lead and possibly out of sight of handler.
- Dog is team leader. Handler may guide, but has to know when to follow.
- Handler watches for change of behavior.
  - Dog locates subject.
  - Returns to handler and gives Trained Final Response.
  - Leads handler back to subject (re-find).

*Party for the Dog!!*
Air Scent Dogs

- Used to “clear an area.”
  - Indicate that no one is there.
  - IC can devote resources elsewhere.
  - Ex., before we send Mountain Rescue into avalanche country, let’s make sure the person didn’t have a heart attack in the campground.

- May use “voice checks.”
  - Their ears are better than ours, too.
    - More sensitive
    - More directional.
Trailing Dogs

- Given a scent article from the subject.
  - Dog handlers prefer to gather themselves.
- Ideally starts from a known point (PLS.)
  - Can start blind and try to find the trail.
  - Can be used to develop containment
- Works on lead.
- Follows freshest trail.
  - May shortcut if person looped.
  - May air scent when close.
- Finds subject - handler is 15’ away
- Party for the Dog!
Trailing Dogs

- Used to “get a direction.”
  - Other teams are then deployed well in front.
- May “work the corners.”
  - Concrete is tough.
- Scent may blow up against curbs, fences or buildings.
- Mentally harder on the dog than air scent.
Cadaver Dogs

There are now two types of cadaver dogs

- Large Source
- Forensic

- May locate small portions of disarticulated remains.
- Slows down and searches small areas thoroughly.
- Gives trained Final Response at source.
  - Is told “show me” and noses strongest point.
  - Entire bodies may overwhelm dog’s nose.

- Party for the Dog!
- (Nooo puppy kisses.)
Death Codes

- Specific Code
  - “We have a one-three.”
  - Family or media will know something’s up.

- Blending Code
  - “We just bumped into Jim Gideon.”
    - Jim is long-deceased member of SAR.
  - “We just bumped into (Insert OL’s Name).”

- Critical issue is tone of voice, not words.
- No codes for injured subjects.
  - *Plain English.*
  - *Forget media, family and HIPPA.*
Location Reporting

- GPS
  - WGS 84
  - UTM Coordinates
  - Other systems possible
- X - Y System
  - Need to have same map & ruler
- Plain English
  - “I’m down by the spoom.”
  - Which is “woods” with the map upside down.
- Urban - Cross streets or addresses.
Comms Platforms

- Public Safety Frequencies
  - OSCCR
  - LERN
  - Specific Team Licensing and Frequencies.
  - State Military Department
    - Five frequencies for use by SAR teams when under a mission number.

- Amateur Radio
  - Use varies by groups.

- Family Radios
  - Secondary platform for training.

- Callsigns typically “Dog ##.”
  - We leave “K9 ##” to police.
Requesting Search Dogs

- Request dog by function needed.
  - Air Scent - Typically Wilderness
  - Trailing- Typically Suburban or Urban
  - Large Source Human Remains Detection (Cadaver)
  - Forensic HRD (Cadaver - Crime Scenes)
- Other functions.
  - Rubble - Collapsed or burned structures.
  - Avalanche.
  - Water Search - Shoreline or from a boat.
- *Bloodhound is a breed, not a type of search dog.*
Questions?

Time for Demonstrations!