

GENERAL ORDER



Title		
Canine Program		
Topic	Series	Number
RAR	306	01
Effective Date		
November 30, 2023		
Replaces:		
GO-RAR-306.01 (K-9 Teams), Effective Date February 18, 2005		
Related to:		
GO-RAR-901.07 (Use of Force)		

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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I. PURPOSE

Trained law enforcement canines (K-9s) have superior senses of smell and hearing which can enhance the capabilities of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD). MPD recognizes the importance of ensuring that K-9s are not deployed in a way that infringe upon the rights of the public. The purpose of this order is to provide procedures that properly control K-9 force potential and channel K-9 use for legally acceptable methods of crime detection, prevention, and control.

II. PROCEDURES

A. Deployment Types

1. The tactical patrol K-9 provides on- and off-lead searches for suspects. The tactical use of a tactical patrol K-9 shall be limited to:

Tactical Patrol K-9
a. When the suspect is reasonably suspected to have committed a crime of violence pursuant to DC Official Code § 23-1331(4) ; or
b. When the suspect is reasonably suspected of being armed and when failure to quickly apprehend the suspect poses a risk of immediate danger to the officer or others.
c. Preventing the escape of a suspect when the criteria in "a." and "b." of this section have been met.

2. Non-tactical detector K-9s are trained in detection and used only in non-aggressive searches. The use of a detector K-9 shall be limited to:

Non-Tactical Detector K-9	
a.	Searches for evidence, narcotics, explosives, contraband, and critical missing persons;
b.	Securing the perimeter of a search area;
c.	Detecting human remains;
d.	Use of a bloodhound for trailing missing persons, fugitives, and criminal suspects; and
e.	Other uses as determined by a Canine Patrol Unit (CPU) official, Special Operations Division (SOD) watch commander, or SOD commanding official.

3. A track conducted by a patrol K-9 is a non-aggressive deployment. This allows the handler to track for missing persons.
4. K-9 teams shall only be dispatched to outside jurisdictions upon approval of the Homeland Security Bureau (HSB) assistant chief or his or her designee. The SOD watch commander shall document the deployment on the PD Form 150 (Watch Commander Report).

B. Requesting K-9 Assistance

1. When the assistance of a K-9 is needed, members shall request CPU response through the Office of Unified Communications (OUC).
2. Members shall secure the perimeter to avoid contaminating the search area with their scent. Once a perimeter is established, the on-scene element official shall ensure that members do not make individual attempts to conduct a search. Once the request for a K-9 has been made, members shall refrain from entering the area to be searched, unless otherwise directed by an on-scene official.
3. When a patrol K-9 team has been dispatched to the scene, an official from the requesting member's district or element shall also respond to the scene. The on-scene element official shall ensure the primary members and the last member to observe the suspects are available to be interviewed by the patrol K-9 team and CPU official, adequate staffing is in place to establish and secure a perimeter, and the perimeter is not broken down until he or she confers with the K-9 team or CPU official on the scene.
4. When the bloodhound team is not on duty and a call back is needed, a watch commander from the element of occurrence or the assigned detective shall complete the bloodhound call back form found on MPD Online Forms for submission to the SOD watch commander. The form employs a matrix that standardizes decisions on call backs. The SOD watch commander shall review the form and ensure bloodhound team response, when applicable.

C. Tactical Patrol K-9 Deployment

1. Before deploying a tactical patrol K-9, handlers shall receive authorization from a CPU official. If the CPU official is unavailable, members shall seek authorization from the SOD watch commander. If the SOD watch

commander is unavailable, handlers shall seek approval from an on-scene official.

2. A CPU official shall respond to all requests for a tactical patrol K-9 to determine whether the tactical use of a K-9 is warranted, whenever feasible. If the CPU official is unable to respond to the scene within a reasonable amount of time, the handler shall provide all necessary information, and the CPU official may authorize use over the radio. The element official should always be on the scene to provide the authorizing CPU official with the necessary information prior to allowing deployment.
3. CPU officials shall not authorize the use of their own assigned K-9. CPU officials require authorization from the CPU commanding official, or, in his or her absence, the SOD watch commander.
4. The only exception to the requirement of an official authorizing the use of a tactical patrol K-9 is under exigent circumstances when the handler is unable to contact anyone and, using sound judgement, deems it necessary to deploy the K-9 to protect him or herself or others from an immediate threat of death or serious injury. In these situations, the handler shall ensure that deployment is only authorized pursuant to this order and that he or she contacts an official as soon as possible.
5. Tactical patrol K-9 handlers shall make the final determination of whether or not to deploy the K-9. If the handler believes the deployment is not warranted, he or she shall inform the involved official of the rationale behind his or her deployment decision and document the rationale in his or her notebook.
6. In circumstances where the tactical deployment of a patrol K-9 is requested, the authorizing official shall ensure that:
 - a. The nature and severity of the offense for which a suspect is sought is determined.
 - b. The age of the subject and whether the subject may be armed, if possible, is determined. Tactical patrol K-9s may be used to search for a juvenile suspected of a crime when there is reasonable suspicion that the juvenile is armed. Tactical patrol K-9s shall not be deployed to locate and apprehend known juvenile suspects who pose no immediate threat of death or serious injury to members on the scene.
 - c. The immediate area to be searched has been vacated by all non-involved personnel, and that a perimeter is established.
 - d. The property owner or manager (if not available, surrounding neighbors) is interviewed to determine whether there are any non-involved persons or children inside the search location. Additionally, the official shall ensure that attempts to determine if anyone at the location may be hearing-impaired, deaf, unable to

- speaking English, or disabled are conducted. When it is known that non-involved persons are present inside the location to be searched, K-9s shall not be deployed unless exigent circumstances exist.
- e. An attempt to determine if there are any animals that the K-9 might come in direct contact with that are inside the premises to be searched is conducted. When it is known that animals are present inside the location to be searched, the official and the K-9 handler shall determine if the K-9 shall be deployed.
 - f. The primary member or the on-scene district or element official communicates all pertinent information to the responding K-9 handler.
 - g. Members on the perimeter are advised that if they encounter a police K-9, to remain still and refrain from running. If possible, the CPU official shall also request that OUC broadcast this announcement and the on-scene district or element official communicate the announcement to members after the first warning is given.
 - h. The perimeter is maintained until the K-9 officer has completed the search, secured his or her K-9, and has advised the official of the results of the search.
7. A CPU official shall ensure that, whenever possible, two K-9 handlers respond to any request for a tactical patrol K-9.
- a. When two handlers respond to a request for service, the primary handler shall search with his or her K-9 and the secondary handler shall act as back-up without his or her K-9.
 - b. If a question arises as to which handler shall be the primary, the CPU official shall designate the primary handler. If a CPU official is not available, the most senior K-9 handler shall designate the primary handler.
8. Tactical patrol K-9 handlers shall use a K-9 to locate only subjects or items that meet the criteria outlined in this order.
9. Absent exigent circumstances and when tactically sound, handlers shall:
- a. Conduct all tactical searches for a suspect with his or her own assigned K-9, except when authorized by the CPU commanding official or the SOD watch commander.
 - b. Advise the dispatcher that the "intent to search" warning announcement is about to be given and request the dispatcher to record the time of announcement.

Tactical Patrol K-9 Deployment Warning Announcements	
(1)	Issue three loud and clear announcements prior to deploying the assigned K-9: <u>“Warning, a police K-9 will be used to search (name of area to be searched). If you don’t come out, I will release my dog. If approached by the dog, surrender and remain still or you may be bitten.”</u>
(2)	Provide a reasonable amount of time for uninvolved parties, other members, and the suspect to come out before commencing with the search.
(3)	After a reasonable amount of time has been given, advise the dispatcher that the search is about to begin. The dispatcher will again announce the time over the radio.
(4)	When moving from an on-leash track to an off-leash search for a suspect, issue an additional three warning announcements at the point of transition.
(5)	Repeat warnings on each level of multi-level structures or dwellings, when practicable. Give subsequent or repeated announcements during the course of a search, at the discretion of the handler, when such a warning will not jeopardize his or her safety.
(6)	During open field or block searches, give an additional warning each time the tactical patrol K-9 team has relocated the equivalent of a city block from where the initial warnings were given.

- c. Where there is reason to believe that a suspect may speak a foreign language, handlers shall announce the warning in English and, when practicable, any other language that may be spoken by the suspect or other persons in the area to be searched. If necessary, the handler shall request language services in accordance with [GO-SPT-304.18 \(Language Access Program\)](#).
- d. Be aware that they may omit the warning announcements in certain circumstances where articulable facts demonstrate the need for complete surprise or where the announcement may place the handler, K-9, or other involved parties in imminent danger. In such a case, the on-scene official shall approve the omission of the warning announcement and document the approval on the PD Form 906 (Tactical Use of K-9 Report).
- e. When tactically sound, keep the K-9 within visual and auditory range at all times, with the exception of clearing a threshold. Clearing a threshold should be typically limited to five seconds, unless the size or structure of the room requires additional time. When tactically sound, handlers shall ensure that they are at the dog’s position within five seconds of a K-9 alert.
- f. Prohibit the K-9 from contacting or biting a subject prior to receiving the appropriate command. Members shall ensure that the only circumstance under which a K-9 contacts or bites a subject without the handler’s command is if the K-9, the K-9 handler, or another person is threatened with a possible attack.
10. When a suspect no longer poses a threat, the handler shall call off the K-9 or tactically remove the K-9 by using his or her hands to physically remove a patrol K-9 that is biting a suspect. A tactical removal can

decrease the chance of the K-9 re-biting the suspect. When doing so, the handler shall pay particular attention to the perceived threat (e.g., suspect armed) or physical resistance presented by the suspect since the average person will struggle if being seized or confronted by a K-9 (struggling, alone, does not justify extended contact). Handlers shall describe the extent of the K-9’s contact with a suspect in the handler’s report of the incident.

11. During the tactical deployment of a patrol K-9 involving a member armed with a patrol rifle or shotgun, members shall, when practical, ensure that the patrol K-9 team consists of at least three members, including the K-9 handler and his or her assigned K-9. The K-9 handler shall control his or her assigned K-9, the member armed with the patrol rifle or shotgun shall provide cover to the K-9 handler, and the third member shall handcuff the suspect.
12. When the apprehension of a subject occurs, K-9 handlers shall radio the appropriate disposition to OUC and notify the SOD watch commander and the CPU commanding official. Apprehensions fall into one of the following dispositions:

K-9 Apprehension Dispositions	
Bite	Apprehension occurred as a result of a K-9 bite.
With contact	Apprehension occurred as a result of a K-9 contact.
Without contact	K-9’s presence was instrumental in the subject’s surrender, without physical contact.
Independent of K-9 involvement	Apprehension occurred without direct K-9 involvement (if the K-9 was used for tracking or searching for a suspect, that fact should be noted).

13. K-9 handlers shall complete a PD Form 906 for every deployment, prior to the end of the handler’s shift.

D. Non-Tactical Detector K-9 Deployment

1. When the non-tactical deployment of a detector K-9 is requested:
 - a. For non-tactical detector dogs that are, or were previously, cross-trained as patrol dogs, handlers shall ensure approval has been granted in accordance with this order. For single use detector K-9s conducting proactive sweeps, approval is not needed.
 - b. Handlers shall apply discretion, in consultation with a CPU official, to determine if the immediate area to be searched needs to be vacated by all members and non-involved parties.
 - c. Handlers shall issue a clear announcement prior to deploying the assigned non-tactical detector K-9: **“Warning. A police canine will be used to search (name of area to be searched). If approached by the dog, please remain still and do not touch the dog or you may be bitten.”**

2. For K-9 deployments involving illegal marijuana offenses, members may deploy detector K-9s after probable cause has been established independently from the use of the K-9.

E. K-9 Bites

1. K-9 handlers shall seek immediate medical treatment for subjects injured by a K-9 in accordance with [GO-PCA-502.07 \(Medical Treatment and Hospitalization of Prisoners\)](#).
2. K-9 handlers shall immediately notify an on-duty CPU official (or SOD watch commander if he or she cannot be reached) when a K-9 has bitten or is alleged to have bitten, regardless of whether or not the member is on-duty or where the incident occurred. The notified CPU official shall immediately notify the SOD watch commander.
3. The SOD watch commander shall immediately notify the Internal Affairs Division (IAD) through the Command Information Center. IAD shall review the incident to determine whether the incident will be investigated as misconduct or a use of force pursuant to [GO-RAR-901.07 \(Use of Force\)](#).
 - a. K-9 bites that **are not** the result of K-9 deployments or that do not result in an injury to a member of the public (e.g., training incidents) may be considered a misconduct violation based on the circumstances surrounding the bite.
 - b. Incidents involving K-9 bites classified as a serious use of force shall be investigated by IAD. The SOD watch commander shall provide the IAD investigator with the "Animal Bite – MPDC" report, PD Form 313 (Arrestee's Injury or Illness Report), force incident report (FIR), PD Form 906, photographs of the injury, and any other applicable documentation. This includes documentation from outside agencies if the K-9 incident occurred in an outside jurisdiction.
 - c. An SOD official of a higher rank than the involved member shall report and document of all K-9 incidents not classified as serious uses of force. The SOD watch commander shall complete and submit a PD Form 901b (Preliminary Report Form) to iad.adminbox@dc.gov (copying the involved member's chain of command), prior to the end of the watch commander's shift. A copy shall also be attached to the watch commander's report.
4. In the event the use of the K-9 has resulted in the apprehension of a person without a K-9 bite or contact, the handler shall immediately notify the official who authorized the deployment and an SOD official (of higher rank than the involved handler) shall ensure that all applicable information is recorded on the PD Form 906.
5. After every K-9 bite and/or contact, the K-9 training sergeant or lead trainer shall evaluate the K-9 and provide appropriate retraining or take

the K-9 out of service, when necessary.

F. Line of Duty Deaths

In the event that a K-9 is killed in the line of duty and/or performing official duties, the K-9 will be afforded a burial with honors, the extent to be determined by the SOD commanding official.

III. DEFINITIONS

When used in this directive, the following terms shall have the meanings designated.

	Term	Definition
1.	Alert	Movement by a K-9 that would indicate the presence of the subject or substance, to include raising its head, sniffing, pawing, scratching, and barking.
2.	Bite	Physical contact that results in a skin wound or puncture produced by a K-9's teeth.
3.	Contact	Touching by a K-9, including nudging, pawing, seizing of subject's clothing, or biting, which may or may not require medical treatment. This does not include playful or non-aggressive behavior.
4.	Crime of violence	Aggravated assault; act of terrorism; arson; assault on a police officer (felony); assault with a dangerous weapon; assault with intent to kill, commit first degree sexual abuse, commit second degree sexual abuse, or commit child sexual abuse; assault with significant bodily injury; assault with intent to commit any other offense; burglary; carjacking; armed carjacking; child sexual abuse; cruelty to children in the first degree; extortion or blackmail accompanied by threats of violence; gang recruitment, participation, or retention by the use or threatened use of force, coercion, or intimidation; kidnapping; malicious disfigurement; manslaughter; manufacture or possession of a weapon of mass destruction; mayhem; murder; robbery; sexual abuse in the first, second, or third degrees; use, dissemination, or detonation of a weapon of mass destruction; or an attempt, solicitation, or conspiracy to commit any of the foregoing offenses [DC Official Code § 23-1331(4)].
5.	Serious use of force	Actions by members including: a. Firearms discharges (except negligent discharges determined to be misconduct by IAD); b. Head strikes with a hard object; c. Those resulting in death or a serious bodily injury; d. Use of asphyxiating restraints or neck restraints; and e. MPD canine bites (except bites determined to be misconduct by IAD).



Pamela A. Smith
 Chief of Police

<i>Amendment #</i>	<i>Page #</i>	<i>Description of Change</i>	<i>Effective Date of Change</i>	<i>Name and Title of Authorizing Member</i>
1	8	Revise Part III.5 pursuant to the Secure DC Omnibus Emergency Amendment Act of 2024 .	3/28/2024	Maureen O'Connell, Director, Policy and Standards Branch