

National Search Dog Alliance (NSDA)

Disaster Type III Human Remains - First Responder

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

- This test has been promulgated by NSDA to assess a handler/K-9 team's ability to locate human remains in natural and man-made disasters. It will also assess the K-9's ability to maneuver and search in various types of rubble and debris.
- The NSDA prerequisites represent those items that we believe will allow the candidate to have the opportunity to safely and successfully complete the Disaster Type III Human Remains Test.

OBJECTIVE

- The Disaster Type III Human Remains Test demonstrates the ability of the team (handler/K-9) to locate human remains trapped in rubble caused by natural or man-made disasters. This field test shall demonstrate the ability of the K-9 to search for and recognize the scent of trapped human remains, to perform a trained final response and for the handler to correctly read the behavior of their K-9 partner. The handler shall be responsible for formulating and articulating their search strategy and providing the Evaluator with a description of their K-9's trained final response (TFR).
- This test is designed to simulate an actual search and not team training. You shall be asked to approach it as such.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- *The test shall not be given if all copies of the prerequisite paperwork have not been presented. Fees shall not be refunded; however, the candidate shall be allowed to take a re-test within one (1) year of the original test date at no additional charge.*
- You may be asked to submit copies of your documents to the Evaluator via mail or e-mail prior to the testing event. The documentation may not be returned.
- Testing shall be of the handler and the K-9 only.
- The Disaster Type III Human Remains Test includes three (3) testing elements: indication, agility, and rubble search.
- The team shall successfully pass all elements in the same testing period in order to pass the test. The elements shall be performed in the order listed in the standard.
- No collars or K-9 search vests may be worn by the K-9 while performing any element of the test.

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- Muzzles are not permitted in any phase of the evaluation process.
- The handler shall maintain continual control of the K-9.
- Physical or verbal abuse of the K-9 is not acceptable at any time.
- The handler is responsible for the care and safety of the K-9 at all times.
- Safety gear and procedures shall be addressed continually. The following safety gear is required to be worn on the rubble site: helmet; gloves; long pants; long sleeve shirt; eye protection; safety toe, steel shank safety boots; and knee protection.
- Aggression shall not be tolerated at any time.
- K-9s that urinate/mark or defecate on or within three (3) feet of the source shall immediately fail the entire test.
- Any accident/injury shall be reported immediately to the lead Principal Evaluator or their designee.
- The NSDA Evaluator(s) and the Hosting Organization Incident Commander (IC) shall determine the testing area.
- It is recommended (not required) that a non-testing, HRD certified K-9 be available to pre-test the search site if the Principal Evaluator feels it necessary to make sure search conditions meet the NSDA standard.
- Hosting Organizations shall designate one (1) or more persons as contact persons in the event that there is a medical emergency or injury to any individual or K-9 participating in, or helping to set up, the test.
- Rescue and medical capabilities shall be available within a reasonable distance of the testing area.
- The NSDA Evaluator(s) shall not inform the handler as to whether the handler has successfully located all human remains sources until all testing candidates have completed testing their K-9s.

EVALUATORS

- The evaluation shall be conducted by a designated NSDA Principal Evaluator with the option of a second Evaluator or Apprentice Evaluator.

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- The Evaluator(s) shall terminate the test if, in their opinion, it becomes hazardous to any of the participants.
- The Evaluator(s) shall have discretion in the administration and evaluation of all portions of the test.

ELEMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Element 1 shall be done first to confirm the K-9 has a readable trained final response before continuing with the test. Element 2 shall then be completed in order for a team to move on to the rubble search.

ELEMENT 1 – FINAL RESPONSE PRE-TEST

Rationale:

- The purpose of this station is to ensure that the K-9 shall independently recognize and independently perform their trained final response on human remains.

Required Handler Skills:

- The handler shall describe the K-9's trained final response to the NSDA Evaluator(s).
- Training aids (balls, food, toys, etc.) may be carried by the handler during this exercise but shall remain out of sight of the K-9. When the exercise is complete (defined as the handler indicates the dog is providing their trained final response and the Evaluator declares the exercise finished), the handler may reward the K-9.
- The K-9 shall be worked in the manner that is required during the actual rubble site testing. This means no collars or search vests may be used. The K-9 shall be void of any items worn on the body with the exception that the handler may choose to work their K-9 in booties.
- Handler shall keep the K-9 under control and shall be able to direct the K-9 either by voice commands, hand signal, or whistle commands.

Required K-9 Skills:

- For the purposes of this element, a "trained final response" is defined as a "trained or reinforced behavior by which the K-9 communicates a find to the handler." The final response shall be consistent throughout the Certification Testing Process and shall be easily recognizable by someone other than the handler (i.e. the NSDA Evaluator). The canine shall demonstrate its trained final response for a duration of ten (10) seconds.

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- The K-9 shall have a trained final response that does not cause damage and shall be consistent with the disaster environment in which the K-9 is working. The K-9 shall not pick up the source material.
- Given the inherent instability of collapsed structures and the difficulties of keeping a K-9 always within visual range in confined space situations, a recall-re-find indication is not acceptable. The K-9 may have any other trained final response that enables it to remain with the human remains and is reproducible and readable by the handler and NSDA Evaluator(s). Examples include a bark, sit, down, fixed stare or a touch with the nose or paw. An aggressive dig is not acceptable.

Handler Information:

- The team shall have five (5) minutes to perform the exercise.
- The handler shall start the K-9 from behind the designated start line. This line shall be eight (8) feet long and twenty-five (25) yards downwind from the source.
- The handler may not cross this line until they indicate to the Evaluator that their dog is performing their trained final response and the Evaluator declares the exercise complete.
- The K-9 must go to the location of the human remains and give the trained final response specified by the handler. If the K-9 does not go directly to the human remains, the handler may use additional commands, as necessary, to direct the K-9 to the human remains location but, once the K-9 engages the human remains (i.e., the K-9's behavior indicates to the NSDA Evaluator(s) that the K-9 has encountered the human remains and that the K-9 recognizes the scent), the handler may not talk or signal the K-9 in any way and the K-9 shall independently perform its trained final response for a duration of ten (10) seconds.

Site Setup:

- The Principal NSDA Evaluator shall approve the site.
- One (1) scent source shall be placed a minimum of twenty (20) minutes prior to the K-9 working the problem.
- NSDA Evaluator(s) shall have a clear view of the K-9's work.
- No known or intentional distractions shall be present.

Scent Source Placement:

- The location of the scent source shall be readily visible to both the K-9 and the handler.

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- The container shall be constructed to prevent the K-9 from accessing the human remains scent source.

Scent Source Material:

- Human remains scent source material shall consist of seventy-five to one hundred (75-100) grams of bone and tissue or just tissue. Pseudo aids, bone-only, or blood---only sources are not acceptable.

ELEMENT 2 – AGILITY

Rationale:

- The purpose of this element is to demonstrate the K-9's ability to negotiate three (3) obstacles in a confident manner and under the direction and control of their handler. These obstacles include a confined space, a narrow walkway, and a teeter totter.

Required Handler Skills:

- No training aids (balls, food, toys, etc) are allowed to be carried by the handler or be present in the testing area during the testing of this element. The K-9 may be rewarded once the testing of this element is complete and the team has exited the testing area for this element.
- The K-9 shall be worked in the manner that is required during the actual rubble site testing. This means no collars or search vests may be used. The K-9 shall be void of any items worn on the body with the exception that the handler may choose to work their K-9 in booties.
- Handler shall keep the K-9 under control and shall be able to direct the K-9 either by voice commands or whistle commands.
- The handler shall be able to send the K-9 on to each obstacle without touching the K-9 in any way.
- Handler may stand beside the K-9 but shall not touch the K-9 once they have been instructed to begin the obstacle.
- Handler can move along the side of the K-9 as they move through each element but they may not precede the K-9 at any time.
- The team shall have five (5) minutes to complete the three (3) obstacles. There is no limit to the number of attempts at each obstacle.

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Required K-9 Skills – Confined Space:

- The K-9 shall confidently enter the confined space and not show fear.
- The K-9 shall move all the way through the space, exiting at the opposite end.

Required K-9 Skills – Narrow Walkway

- The K-9 shall confidently climb up onto a stable board without assistance.
- The K-9 shall confidently walk the full length of the board and exit at the opposite end.
- The K-9 shall not jump off the board anywhere except at the end of the board.
- At the handler's discretion, they shall stop the K-9, command the K-9 to turn on the board facing the opposite direction, once again command the K-9 to turn 180° and then proceed to the end of the board exiting by whatever means provided but not jumping to the ground before reaching the end of the board.

Required K-9 Skills – Teeter Totter

- The K-9 shall confidently walk onto the teeter totter without assistance.
- The K-9 shall confidently walk the full length of the teeter totter and exit at the opposite end.
- The K-9 shall not jump off the teeter totter anywhere except at the opposite end.

Site Setup

- The Principal NSDA Evaluator shall approve the site.
- The testing site shall allow for the K-9 to move through the area effortlessly.
- NSDA Evaluator(s) shall have a clear view of the K-9's work.

Confined Space Construction:

- The entrance and exit shall be clearly visible to the handler and Evaluator(s).
- The space shall be constructed so that the K-9 shall move into a dark area which contains enough of a turn so the K-9 cannot see the exit until they make the turn.

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- The space shall be at least twelve (12) feet in length but not more than twenty (20) feet.
- The space shall be at least two (2) feet tall but no taller than three (3) feet to allow for larger breeds.
- Acceptable confined spaces could be an agility tunnel, culverts, chairs lined up to create an “L” shape with a tarp thrown over them, etc.

Walkway Construction:

- The entrance and exit shall be clearly visible to the handler and Evaluator(s).
- The walkway shall be constructed so that it allows for easy access to the elevated board and allows for easy exit from the elevated board.
- The board shall be at least eight (8) feet in length but not more than twelve (12) feet.
- The board shall be twelve (12) inches wide and shall support the weight of a 100 lb. K-9.
- The board shall be elevated between two (2) and four (4) feet.
- The entrance onto the board may be a ramp, stable angulated steps (not a ladder), or a stable platform that lends to easy access onto the board.
- The exit off the board may be a ramp or stable platform that lends to easy descent off the board.

Teeter Totter Construction:

- The walkway shall be constructed so that it allows for easy access and allows for easy exit.
- The board shall be at least eight (8) feet in length but not more than twelve (12) feet.
- The board shall be twelve (12) inches wide and shall support the weight of a 100 lb. K-9.
- The pivot platform/brace under the board shall be located near the center of the board allowing one end of the board to rest on the ground without being held.
- The pivot platform/brace shall be solid enough so that it does not move and shall allow for the board to rock freely without moving back and forth.

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- The pivot platform/brace shall have a minimum height of two (2) feet and a maximum height of three (3) feet.

ELEMENT 3 – SEARCH

Rationale:

- The search element demonstrates the ability of the team to integrate the previously evaluated elements in a realistic, simulated disaster environment into an effective search tool.

Required Handler Skills:

- Assess the situation, plan, brief and conduct an effective search.
- Establish scene safety.
- Conduct a safety interview which includes the following:
 - What time did the structure collapse?
 - What type of occupancy was the structure (school, office, apartment building, etc.)?
 - What is the number of suspected missing persons?
 - Has this structure been searched before?
 - Has a structural engineer checked the building?
 - What were the findings?
 - Is it safe to enter?
 - Are blueprints available?
 - Has Haz Mat checked the building?
 - What were the findings?
 - Have the utilities been secured? How and by whom?
 - Gas?
 - Electric?

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- Water?
- Is Heavy Rescue available?
- Is Medical available?
- Is there a veterinarian available?
- Notify the NSDA Evaluator(s) of the K-9's trained final response.
- Mark the location(s) of the K-9's trained final response(s).
- Document location(s) of the indications, areas searched, and any hazards and unique features on a map drawn by the handler during the debriefing.
- Have the ability to negotiate the rubble in a safe manner and without the assistance of other personnel.
- Demonstrate appropriate K-9 care, safety and welfare.

Required K-9 Skills:

- Ability to search independently but shall be responsive to handler direction and control when given.
- Exhibits trained final response at human remains source, as demonstrated in Element 1 at the location of each source, with no false final responses or compromise of the human remains scent source(s). Duration of response ten (10) seconds.
- The trained final response shall not cause damage to the human remains and shall be consistent with the disaster environment in which the K-9 is to work.
- No collars or vests are permitted while searching the rubble. Booties are acceptable.

Handler Information:

- One of the NSDA Evaluators shall brief the handler, including any areas that are off limits. Areas that are off limits shall be clearly marked and shall not contain human remains scent sources.
- The handler shall have five (5) minutes to assess the situation/scene and brief the NSDA Evaluator(s) on their search strategy. Handler shall have full perimeter access to rubble site, without the K-9, to develop their search strategy.

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- There shall be a total of one (1) or two (2) human remains scent sources in the rubble site.
- There shall be at least one (1) distraction in the search area.
- The team shall be allowed twenty (20) minutes to search the rubble site for one (1) or two (2) human remains sources.
- The K-9 team shall receive ten (10), five (5), and two (2) minute time-remaining notifications.
- The handler shall have full access to the rubble site.
- The K-9 team shall locate and correctly identify all human remains sources.
- The handler may not touch any evaluation props or move any debris in the search area.
- The handler may not access the rubble in any area identified as off-limits. If the K-9 enters these areas, the handler shall immediately direct the K-9 out of these areas.
- The NSDA Evaluator Team shall be in attendance during the briefing. The handler shall inform the NSDA Evaluator(s) of the search strategy. NSDA Evaluator(s) shall then proceed to a predetermined location to view the rubble work before the team's twenty (20) minute time starts.
- NSDA Evaluator(s) shall be positioned on the rubble site while the K-9 is working and shall have a clear view of the K-9's work.
- The handler shall remove the K-9's collar and leash.
- The handler may direct the K-9 to search the area but shall not encourage the K-9's trained final response.
- The handler may mark the areas of indication at any time. However, once an area is marked, it cannot be undone.
- If a handler correctly calls a false trained final response, there is no penalty.
- The handler shall have five (5) minutes to debrief with the NSDA Evaluator(s). At a minimum, the debrief shall include:
 - sketch map with locations of the trained final response(s).
 - unique features of the site (i.e. hazards, landmarks).

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- wind direction.
 - indication of North.
 - follow-up recommendations.
- The handler shall perform a physical assessment of the K-9 after the search.
 - The NSDA Evaluator(s) shall not inform the handler whether the location(s) they marked are correct until all of the K-9 teams have rotated through the Search Element and the final evaluation results are conveyed during the Post-Evaluation briefing.
 - Exception to this would be K-9 teams that are testing and then leaving the testing sites without conversing with other K-9 teams that have not tested.

Site Setup:

- There shall be one (1) test site.
- The Principal NSDA Evaluator shall approve the site.
- The distraction shall be hidden from view and non-accessible to the K-9.
- The distraction shall consist of one (1) of the following materials: animal remains, food items, clothing, or toys.
- The rubble site shall consist of a minimum area of 2,500 square feet and a maximum of 5,000 square feet with a minimum height of four (4) feet throughout. The intention is to provide criteria to adjust the footprint of the pile based on its complexity and height, with more complex rubble reduced in square footage and less complex rubble increased in square footage. It should consist predominantly of concrete or a mixture of materials common to disaster sites.
- Banner tape is to be used to reduce the search area when larger rubble sites are being used and to identify off-limit areas.

Human Remains Source Placement:

- Human remains source(s) shall be well concealed from both the handler and the K-9.
- Depth of each human remains source shall be no more than two (2) feet depending on the type of debris.
- Hiding areas shall be constructed to prevent any size K-9s from accessing the source(s).

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- Source(s) shall be in place a minimum of twenty (20) feet apart from each other and twenty (20) feet from the distraction.
- Human remains source(s) shall be in place a minimum of twenty (20) minutes prior to testing.

Human Remains Scent Source Material:

- Human remains scent source material shall consist of seventy-five to one hundred (75-100) grams of bone and tissue or just tissue. Pseudo aids, bone-only, or blood-only sources are not acceptable. Source materials should be concealed in containers that protect the environment and do not allow for leaking of source material.

Successful Evaluation Completion:

- Successful evaluation completion shall be based on compliance with the Pass/Fail Ground Rules and completion of the required skills, including locating and identifying the location of all human remains sources within the allotted time and with no false trained final responses.

RE-TESTING

- One testing fee covers an initial test and a re-test, if necessary, within one (1) year of the time of test payment.
- The definition of a re-test shall be an additional attempt of an entire test. If a handler is allowed to re-test during the same testing event of an initial failure, the scoring sheet of the initial test shall be marked with "re-test immediately". If the Evaluator marks the initial failed attempt as "re-test in three (3) or six (6) months", the handler shall not re-test during the same testing event.
- Re-tests during the same testing event shall be at the discretion of the Evaluator, only if time permits and there is justification.
- A team that was unable to perform the search in the designated time allowed or called a false final response shall not necessarily warrant a re-test during the same testing event.
- A test that is discontinued and cannot be resumed due to weather or safety concerns shall not count as a failure. A re-test at the same testing event may be provided at the Evaluator's discretion. If time does not allow for a re-test, the scoring sheet shall be marked "Discontinued" with the reason stated and the handler shall be allowed one attempt in the following six (6) months. The testing fee shall be credited to the re-test but not refunded.
- A copy of the Scoring Sheet shall be given to the handler.

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RE-CERTIFICATION:

- Re-certification is required every two (2) years.