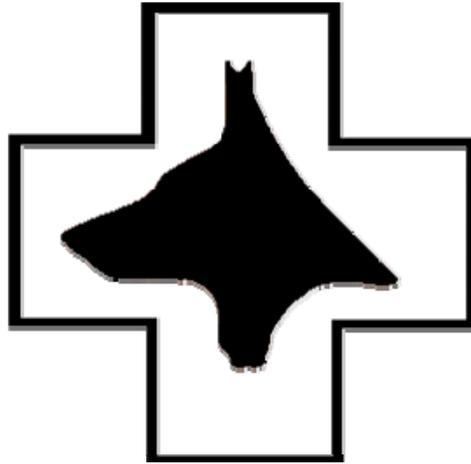# American Rescue Dog Association

Canine Team Standards

And

Certification Procedures

Introduction

The American Rescue Dog Association (ARDA) certifies canine teams for operational status in search and rescue or recovery. The purpose of this document is to describe the standards of performance accepted by ARDA for operational status and the certification procedures that apply to each canine team discipline certified by ARDA. These standards and procedures are meant to provide consistency in expectations and testing parameters within the wide array of disciplines that comprise canine search and rescue/recovery. ARDA's intent is to ensure that any canine team so certified is competent to perform canine search and rescue or recovery operations within the bounds of the discipline for which the team is certified.

Each certification evaluation contained in this document meets or exceeds the minimum requirements as stated in the National Incident Management System (NIMS) Resource Typing and Credentialing Documents. The most recent version of these documents can be found respectively at:
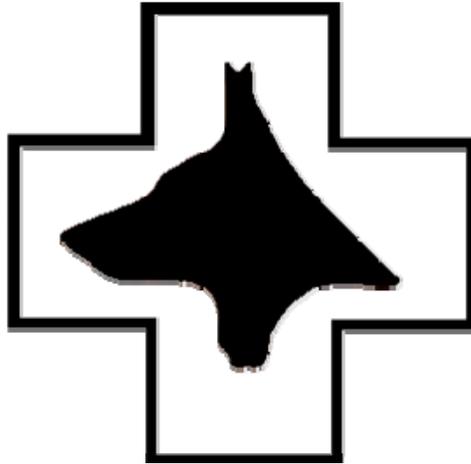
 http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/508-8_search_and_rescue_resources.pdf, and http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/sar_jobtitle_111806.pdf.

This document is comprised of the following sections and appendices:

- Section I: Evaluation Ground Rules and Prerequisites

- Section II: Area Search Certification

- Section III: Human Remains Detection (Land) Certification

- Section IV: Human Remains Detection (Water) Certification

- Appendix A: Glossary

- Appendix B: Approved Course List: Basic Field Skills and Search and Rescue Knowledge

- Appendix C: Required Minimum Equipment

- Appendix D: Radio Protocol

As a final note, it should be remembered that certification is aimed at entry level performance. ARDA canine teams are expected to continue to improve their performance by means of continued training after certification.

American Rescue Dog Association

Section I – Evaluation Ground Rules and Prerequisites

Date Last Updated:

May 2015

Date Last Reviewed:

May 2016

Table of Contents

Evaluation Ground Rules and Prerequisites

This section outlines both evaluation ground rules and the prerequisite minimum requirements that must be met prior to an individual canine team requesting a certification evaluation. This section also contains some assessments that are not required but are highly recommended.

Evaluation Ground Rules

The following ground rules apply to all certification evaluations. Any infraction of these rules may result in immediate termination of the evaluation.

- All certification evaluations will be conducted by a minimum of two (2) rostered ARDA evaluators.

- The candidate seeking to take a certification evaluation is required to provide proof that he or she has successfully met all of the prerequisites listed in this standard.

- Subjects used in an evaluation should not be people with whom the canine is familiar such as members of its family, close friends, or persons with which it frequently trains.

- The location used for an evaluation should not be one used recently or frequently for regular training by the canine team(s) being evaluated. If located within a large area, such as a state or national park which is used for regular training, the evaluation should be set up in an area not used recently or frequently.

- The candidate must not be lacking any important clothing or equipment that renders him/her ineffective or unsafe in the field.

- Verbal and/or physical abuse towards the evaluators, helpers, or the subjects is not permitted at any time.

- 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.

- Flat collars and electric collars (turned on or off) are permitted during all certification evaluations unless otherwise specified in the evaluation criteria. No other type of collar is allowed.

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

Prerequisite Minimum Requirements

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

Physical Requirements

Objective

To ensure that all deployable individuals and canines possess the physical attributes necessary to facilitate safe and effective search and rescue operations.

Criteria

- 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 of the tasks inherent to the successful completion of the evaluation.

- The evaluation candidate must be dressed in appropriate clothing and have the required equipment for the discipline in which he or she is seeking certification.

- The canine must be at least 18 months of age.

- The canine must be in good physical condition and may not possess any physical handicaps, limitation, or conditions that would preclude its safe performance of the tasks inherent to the successful completion of the evaluation.

- The canine must have current inoculations for rabies and distemper.

Written Documentation

Objective

To ensure that all evaluation candidates have written proof of competing the prerequisite minimum requirements prior to requesting a certification evaluation.

Criteria

- The handler must have signed and submitted to ARDA the "ARDA Code of Ethics Agreement".

- The candidate is to provide proof of the completion of each of the prerequisite minimum requirements herein listed. Proof of completion of the canine team requirements must be for the canine and handler, as a team, to be evaluated.

- The handler must provide a veterinary record for their canine that shows its rabies and distemper immunities are current.

- The evaluation candidate must provide a written log of their training. This log is to include at least the date and location of each training event and a brief description of the training. The log is to cover the past year and must show at least 12 periodic trainings during that time.

Medical Skills

Objective

To ensure all deployable individuals have received training in the application of general first aid practices and CPR in order to provide initial treatment and support to an injured subject.

Criteria

- American Heart Association Heartsaver First Aid Course (approximately 3.5 hours) or equivalent. Certification must be current.

- American Heart Association Heartsaver AED (approximately 3.5 hours includes Adult/Child CPR with mask and choking and Adult/Child AED) or equivalent. Certification must be current.

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.

Criteria

IS-100.b: Introduction to ICS

IS-200.b: ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents

IS-700.a: National Incident Management System (NIMS), An Introduction

IS-800.b: 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

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 knowledge of general search and rescue terminology, practices, and procedures and demonstrate the basic skills necessary for effective search and rescue field deployment.

Criteria

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

Crime Scene Preservation

Objective

To ensure that the deployable individual has received training in procedures to be taken to protect evidence at a search scene where a crime may have been committed.

Criteria

Completion of a crime scene preservation course endorsed by a recognized law enforcement agency.

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 or her uniform, field pack, and personal pack. The minimum requirements for uniform, field pack, and personal pack are stipulated in Appendix C.

Guidelines

- A field pack check must be successfully completed within the year prior to taking the evaluation.

- If the candidate is seeking recertification and has remained active in search and rescue/recovery since that canine team's last certification, the field pack check does not have to be retaken. The training log is acceptable proof of activity.

- The candidate is expected to carry their field pack during their evaluation.

Canine Obedience

Objective

To ensure that the canine is reliably obedient to the handler under conditions similar to those likely to be encountered at a search scene.

Criteria

The handler must provide written proof that the canine and handler have passed a nationally recognized obedience test which meets or exceeds the American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen (AKC CGC) test. Acceptable alternatives to the AKC CGC include, but are not limited to obedience tests conducted by: AKC, ARDA, FEMA, law enforcement canine instructors, Association of Pet Dog Trainers instructors, and National Association of Dog Obedience instructors. If another standard is used, it is recommended that the candidate check with ARDA prior to scheduling an evaluation to make sure the obedience standard they test to is acceptable.

Guidelines

- As a prerequisite for any canine certification evaluation, the canine obedience test must be successfully completed within the year prior to taking the certification evaluation.

Recommended Assessments

This section describes the assessments that are not required, but are highly recommended be completed prior to requesting a certification evaluation. ARDA believes these recommended assessments will better prepare the candidate team for the certification evaluation and subsequent search and rescue/recovery operations.

ARDA Land Navigation Assessment

The ARDA Land Navigation Assessment is not a required prerequisite to requesting a certification evaluation, but is highly recommended. This assessment tests all of the navigation skills need to successfully complete a certification evaluation.

Objective

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

Setup

The area selected for the practical 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. b. Declination and variance

2. **Topographic Map**
   a. Contour lines and intervals
   b. Colors
   c. Symbols
   d. Coordinate systems (e.g., UTM, USNG, latitude/longitude)
   e. Directions and orienting

    f.   Distances and map scales

    g. Legends

3. Map and compass skills (table top exercises)

    a. Adjust for declination

    b. Determine a route (azimuth/heading, distance, terrain, obstacles)

    c. Determine a position (by grid system coordinates and by triangulation)

    d. Understand use of a pace count

4. Global Positioning System (GPS)

    a. Settings (datum set, coordinate system, etc.)

    b. Functions: compass, tracks and waypoints (set and retrieve)

    c. Translate coordinates read from GPS to a position on topographic map

Practical Assessment

1. **Plot/read position on a topographic map –** The individual must be able to plot and read a given position on the map using both a grid coordinate system (UTM or USNG) 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 declination.

3. **Recognize terrain features depicted on a topographic map –** The individual must be able to interpret contour lines and recognize terrain features depicted on a topographic map (e.g., hilltops, drainages, etc.).

4. **Recognize map symbols and colors –** The individual must be able to recognize map symbols and colors depicted on a topographic map to interpret them as features (e.g., buildings, roads, power lines, body of water, etc.).

5. **Use of pace count –** The individual must know his or her pace count and be able to demonstrate an understanding of how to apply this knowledge in the field to estimate distances covered.

6. **Plot and follow a search grid pattern –** The individual will be assigned a small sector (no more than 20 acres) with at least 2 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 assessor to observe and verify that the individual has an understanding of how to plot a grid pattern for a canine search task and execute the pattern in evenly spaced sweeps.

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 set and grid system are set; set and retrieve a track; mark and retrieve a waypoint; and read coordinates from a GPS device, report position verbally, and plot the position on a topographic map.

Guidelines

Written Assessment

- Must be completed in no more than 1.5 hours. 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.

- The use of a topographic map is required and will be supplied by the assessor. If asked, the assessor will indicate the location of the starting point on the map.

- 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 assessor, 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.

ARDA Obedience Assessment

This assessment is not a required prerequisite to requesting a certification evaluation, but is highly recommended.   This assessment tests all of the canine obedience skills need to successfully complete a certification evaluation.

Objective

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 assessors. The handler will proceed to a designated area out of the dog's sight. After being out of sight of the handler for a period of 1 minute, a team member (not a family member or the assessor) will un-tie the dog and return it to its handler. The dog does not have to be in "perfect" heel position; however it should 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. (Non-testing canine teams may be used if needed). A third handler, with canine on lead, will complete a figure-8 pattern around the posts, passing within two (2) feet of each of the posts, then complete a second figure-8 in the reverse direction. Upon completing the figure-8 patterns, the canine team will switch places with one of the post teams and that old post team will complete the figure-8 pattern in the same manner. Another switch is made to allow the other post team to do the figure-8 pattern. The dog(s) being evaluated must remain under control of the handler and display no overt aggression while doing the figure-8 and also while acting as a post. For the test to be fair, non-testing dogs used for this exercise must remain under control and display no overt aggression to each other or the dog(s) 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" from the assessor, the handler will command the dog to heel. The dog 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 the handler's control. At the command "halt" from the assessor, the handler will stop and the dog will sit. The heeling exercise will include right and left turns, about turns, fast, slow and normal pace. The handler should have the dog's attention at all times. Additional or repetitive commands are acceptable.

4. **Stop on Recall –** The canine shall be placed on a stay command 75 feet (25 meters) from the handler. Upon direction from the assessor, the handler will call their dog. The handler will then command the dog to stop at the halfway point. Once the stop command has been given, an immediate change in gait is required and the dog must then come to a stop. The dog may drop, sit, or stand and will be judged by the quickness of its response. The handler may give multiple commands. The dog shall remain stationary until released or recalled by the handler at the direction of the assessor.

5. **Emergency Stop –** The canine will be sent out free to roam. Once the dog is approximately 75 feet (25 meters) away from the handler the assessor will command the handler to stop the dog. Once the stop command has been given, an immediate change in gait is required and the dog must then come to a stop. The dog may drop, sit, or stand and will be judged by the quickness of its response. The handler may give multiple commands. The dog shall remain stationary until released or recalled by the handler at the direction of the assessor.

6. **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 assessor, each handler shall give their dog the "wait" command and then proceed to a designated area out of the dog's sight. Time starts when the assessor states "leave the dog". The dog may lie down, sit, stand, or shift position, but shall not move more than a body length in any direction from where it was placed. After five (5) minutes, the assessor will direct the handlers to return to the dogs. Handlers may give a verbal or a hand signal to their dogs to stay, if needed, while returning. The exercise is complete when all handlers have returned to their dogs and the assessor states "exercise complete". No release of their dog by any handler is allowed until the "exercise complete" command is issued.

The assessor should take into consideration the comfort of the canine (e.g., do not choose a place too hot, on anthills, etc.). The exercise will be set up so that the handlers walk away from the dogs from the front as opposed to going behind the dogs. The dogs shall be left under the supervision of a monitor other than the assessor or a handler being tested. The monitor is permitted to repeat the "wait" command to any dog during the exercise. If any dog breaks the "wait" or becomes overly disruptive, it may be removed from the exercise. If needed, dogs not being tested may be used to meet the 3-dog minimum requirement. For the test to be fair all of the dogs participating in this exercise, whether being tested or not, must remain under control and display no overt aggression to each other or the dog(s) being evaluated.

Guidelines

- All of the 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 three (3) months. If the element is failed a second time or three (3) months elapse without successful completion of the assessment, the assessment must be retaken in its entirety.

ARDA Agility Assessment

The ARDA Agility Assessment is not a required prerequisite to requesting a certification evaluation, but is highly recommended. This assessment tests all of the canine agility skills needed to successfully complete a certification evaluation.

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 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 assessment, the assessor 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 dog must not be able to see through the tunnel to the end. Partial covering of the exit is permitted. The dog must be able to fit into the tunnel without crawling.

2. **Unpleasant Surface –** A surface that is unpleasant for the dog to walk on (e.g., grating, aluminum siding/roofing, tile floor, etc.). The surface should be at least 6 feet long and 2 feet wide.

3. **Plank –** A stable plank, 8 to 12 feet long, no less than 10 inches wide which is at least 2 feet and no more than 4 feet off the ground.

4. **Unstable Surface –** The surface can be a mix of obstacles but must wobble under the dog when walked on. The surface will be no more than 4 feet off the ground.

5. **Open Stairs –** A flight of at least 8 open stairs such as those found on a wooden deck, fire escape, etc. The dog must climb and go down the stairs. The dog can either be on-lead or off and the handler can walk with the dog but may not precede the dog.

6. **High Jump –** The canine is to jump to a stable platform of a height between 24 and 30 inches.

7. **Swim –** The canine is to swim for a distance of at least 30 feet in calm water.

Guidelines

- The dog will work off-lead on all elements with the exception of the open stairs, which may be worked on-lead or off-lead.

- All agility elements must be successfully completed on the same day with the exception of the swimming element that may be done at another time and place.

- The handler must not precede the dog on the obstacle nor teach the obstacle during the assessment.

- Not including the swimming element which may be tested separately, 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 three (3) months. If the element is failed a second time or three (3) months elapse without successful completion of the assessment, the assessment must be retaken in its entirety.