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Standard Guide for Demonstrating Minimum Skills of Search and Rescue Dogs and Handlers¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This guide covers voluntary uniform training guidelines for dogs and handlers who engage in search and rescue (SAR) activities throughout the United States.

1.2 This guide provides a minimum set of training goals against which SAR dog teams and organizations may voluntarily evaluate their own training programs.

1.3 This guide provides a means of documenting a minimum standard for those agencies who request SAR dog resources for SAR operations and require such documentation.

1.4 Local SAR dog handlers and parent organizations are responsible for testing and verification that individual resources meet or exceed these guidelines.

1.5 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*²

F1633 [Guide for Techniques in Land Search](#)

F1848 [Classification for Search and Rescue Dog Crew/Teams](#)

F1879 [Guide for Demonstrating Obedience and Agility in Search and Rescue Dogs](#)

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

3.1.1 *alert*—an indication by a dog that signals the handler that the targeted scent has been found.

3.1.2 *bring-sel*—an object carried by the dog or handler that is retrieved or tugged on by the dog when the dog finds its target.

3.1.3 *refind*—an action by a free-ranging dog that is initiated after the dog finds its target and results in the dog directing the handler back to the target.

3.1.4 *return*—an action of a free-ranging dog that brings the dog back to its handler after finding its target.

3.1.5 *scent article*—an object used by search personnel to familiarize a dog with the scent of a subject.

4. Summary of Guide

4.1 This guide provides dog handlers, units and organizations in differing locales with the ability to understand and replicate skills and training required to meet these minimum guidelines.

4.2 This guide identifies a minimum set of skills that will help establish the mission readiness of a search dog crew³ for search and rescue operations.

4.3 The dog and handler skills demonstrate the crew's abilities to estimate probabilities of detection.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This guide may be used by units, handlers, and requesting agencies when evaluating dog resources or as a basis for establishing local minimum performance guidelines or standards. All or a subset of this guide may be utilized.

5.2 Agencies and organizations who have responsibility for search and rescue operations may use this guide as a basis for developing standardized testing and certification of search dog resources.

5.3 This guide does not provide a theoretical basis for how a search dog crew works, rather it describes the minimum results desired. Definitions that are referenced are provided to develop consistency in interpretation.

5.4 Each dog team, unit or organization wishing to use this guide has the responsibility of managing and administering it. Units may wish to use evaluators from other units or organizations, or, request assistance in obtaining qualified evaluators from organizations such as the SAR Dog Section of the National Association of Search and Rescue (NASAR). This decision however, rests solely with the individual team or organization. The method of evaluation is also entirely at the discretion of each user of this guide.

¹ This guide is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee F32 on Search and Rescue and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee F32.02 on Management and Operations.

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² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

³ These Guides are currently under development