



AREA SEARCH DOG OPERATIONAL READINESS TEST (ORT)

The need for a specialist dog trained to locate live human subjects as well as recently deceased humans is obvious. SDONA feels that the following performance evaluation will result in a canine which can search for the lost human subject whether they are alive or deceased in many situations therefore insists on the following absolutes:

- **The dog must search intensively and with endurance for the scent of both live human subjects and human remains**
- **NO DIFFICULTY will distract the dog from searching; including such challenges as:**
 - **Rugged terrain**
 - **Distracting scents**
 - **Other teams, noise, or distractions**
- **The dog must recognize the scent of live human subjects and human remains, differentiating it from all other possible odors and must indicate its location to its handler (by the handler reported Trained Final Response).**

Recognizing the above absolutes, the training and evaluation of an **AREA SEARCH DOG team** must be rigorous and thorough. Recognizing also that this training and evaluation must be periodically checked for applicability, therefore, this document will undergo regular review (yearly review).

AREA SEARCH DOGS must be trained and TESTED in order that user agencies be ensured that they are using a quality team. Training and testing are inseparable. Quality cannot be tested into a dog team. Testing serves only as a quality control measure. Training is at the core of the validity of a detector dog team and is the foundation of that team's service.

Testing standards must be developed according to the job the team will perform in actual situations. All situations cannot be covered but most common scenarios can be accommodated. The testing should measure the abilities of both dog and handler. Therefore, testing standards should have situations which require decision making on the part of both the handler and the dog. SDONA has attempted to develop standards which are both practical and challenging. A team which is comprised of a well-trained and capable dog and handler will have no problem successfully completing these tests. It is at the core of SDONA philosophy that a canine team which is trained for a single purpose will be most successful. Any comment of these standards will be appreciated and considered in future revisions.

Requirements for First-Time Application to Participate in the AREA SEARCH DOG Operational Readiness Test (ORT)

1. The handler must be at least 18 years of age.
2. The dog must be at least 18 months of age.
3. The dog must be tattooed or micro chipped for positive identification – if the dog is not tattooed or microchipped a photograph (taken by a SDONA official) will be attached to the testing documentation for positive identification.
4. Proof of Rabies Vaccination or certified titers.
5. The handler must present evidence of completion of the following classes and courses or an affidavit signed by an official of the handler's unit:
 - a. Basic First Aid
 - b. CPR
 - c. Navigation with map and compass and GPS
 - d. Successful completion of a National or State level certification in area or wilderness search.
 - e. Crime Scene recognition and preservation
 - f. Hazmat Awareness – recommend Hazmat Operations course
 - g. Confined Space Awareness
 - h. Blood borne Pathogens
 - i. NIMS and ICS Training courses – IS-100, IS-200, IS-700 and IS -800
6. A dog/handler team must hold a current National or state certification in area or wilderness search. *Although a National or state certification is not required in HRD, the dog must be able to recognize human remains odor and perform a trained final response on that odor, per the Odor Recognition Test (pg. 5).*
7. The handler must hold a current background check run within 1 year of ORT date or obtain an official background check. Backgrounds checks are to be completed by a law enforcement agency (ie: State Police, FBI, etc..) and must include local, state, and national searches.

Written Test:

A written test will be administered prior to the ORT. Questions on all phases of AREA SEARCH DOG work may include, but are not limited to:

1. Navigation
2. Strategy and Tactics
3. Safety
4. Working with other SAR and governmental resources
5. Decision making questions
6. Ethics
7. Documentation

Questions will be formatted as multiple choice and short essay questions. An oral test may be given under special conditions. A score of 80% or greater is needed to pass the test.

The ORT is valid for two years from the date of completion. Re-certification must meet all prior requirements with the exception of a current National or State level certification in AREA SEARCH, providing that the SDONA ORT re-certification falls within a 90-day grace period of the previous test date.

Test rules:

1. The tests will be delivered over a 24-48 hour period.
2. The test will be administered with an Incident Command System in place
3. A dog/handler team may apply and attempt the AREA SEARCH DOG ORT if they hold a current National or state certification in area or wilderness search.
4. All tests will have a minimum of 7 exercises
5. Dog/handler teams may be randomly assigned to a group which will operate together. However, a group member will not be allowed to observe another group member searching.
6. Target odors – numbers and types of target odors will be determined by random throw of a dice
7. A dog/handler team may be assigned a safety/observer.
8. All Trained Final Responses (TFRs) by the dog must be clearly articulated to each evaluator and must follow the requirements below:

Acceptable Trained Final Responses (TFR):

1. All TFRs must be performed independently by the dog with no assistance by the handler.
2. Refind or stay and bark (accepted but not preferred)
3. The **“REFIND” TFR** is defined as the dog locates, returns quickly, comes within touching distance of the handler, gives a positive and unique signal to the handler, and leads the handler directly back to the subject. The dog may bark at the handler, deliver a “bringsel” or tug at an article attached to the handler. Other methods of “indicating” may be accepted if well-articulated to the evaluators. (e.g. the “jump alert” – discouraged but acceptable)
4. The **“STAY AND BARK” TFR** is defined as the dog locates, makes a timely decision that they have located, stays at the location of the scent (live human subject or HR) and performs continuous barking until the handler gets to the dog.

General Ground Rules for Participation:

1. A food or toy reward is allowed at the discretion of the handler (food must not be dropped or left at a target odor).
2. Muzzles are not permitted in any phase of the evaluation process.

3. No short lead, traffic lead, training tabs or other weighted object may be attached to the collar at any time during searching, however, the handler may utilize a six (6) foot to twenty-five (25) foot leash to search
4. No prong, choke or electronic collars. GPS tracking collars may be used. If they are combined with an electronic “shocking” collar (i.e.: Garmin Alpha) the training element must be disabled/turned off.
5. The handler must maintain control of the canine at all times.
6. Abuse (e.g., physical, mental, verbal, *etc.*) of the canine is not acceptable at any time. If abuse is determined, the handler will be removed from the test.
7. The handler is responsible for the care and safety of the canine at all times.
8. Safety procedures will be followed at all times.
9. Aggression by dog or handler will not be tolerated at any time.
10. Testing teams may withdraw from testing without prejudice at any time.
11. For double-blind testing, an observer/safety flanker may be assigned to a team during a search. This flanker will not supply any information to the handler and will not know the location of human remains targets. The flanker’s role is to verify that there has been no disturbance to the area around the TFR, confirm the dog performed the handler described TFR without handler assistance, and that the handler did not attempt to visualize the odor source (i.e.: no digging, opening of doors, etc.)
12. The testing team must introduce themselves to the evaluator(s) at the Odor Recognition test. This introduction must include their name and their dog’s name.

Number and type of target odors distractor odors will be determined by random throws of dice. At least two elements will NOT have a target odor.

AREA SEARCH DOG ORT

There will be 0-2 subjects/HR odor sources per search and there must be at least 2 areas with no target odors. The numbers and types of targets will be determined by random selection.

SEARCH AREA DESCRIPTION **TIME ALLOWED**

(1)	Odor Recognition Test (live and/or HR)	N/A
(1)	Hasty Trail – 500 M	30 minutes
(3)	40 Acre (wooded with medium underbrush)	60 minutes
(2)	20 Acre Night (wooded with light underbrush)	60 minutes
(1)	Building	30 minutes

Odor Recognition Test:

1. THE TEAM MUST PASS THE ODOR RECOGNITION TEST TO CONTINUE THE OPERATIONAL READINESS TEST (ORT)
2. The dog will demonstrate their TFR on a live subject and human remains.
3. The live subject will be placed just out of sight but no further than 50 meters from the start. The handler may move with the dog but cannot get any closer than 25 meters to the subject.
4. The dog must move away from the handler and actively search for the subject and perform its predetermined TFR with no assistance from the handler
5. The human remains will be placed 20 – 25 meters from the start. The handler must remain at the starting point.
6. The dog must move away from the handler and perform its predetermined TFR with no assistance from the handler.

Operational Readiness Test Elements Guidelines

Hasty search:

- The search path may be a trail, logging road or a rarely used road approximately 500 meters long.
- Target odors¹ will be placed within 20 – 40 feet of either edge of the trail or road
 - distractor odors may be randomly placed
- This test will be performed single blind² and observed by the evaluator(s)
- The team will have 30 minutes to complete this search

3 X 40 acre tests (woods and underbrush)

- 40 acres ± 2 acres
- 0-2 target odors¹
- 1-2 distractor odors
- The team will have 60 minutes to complete each search area
- This test will be performed double blind³

2 X 20 acre night tests (wooded with light underbrush)

- 20 acres ±1 acre
- 0-2 target odor¹
- 1-2 distractor odors
- The team will have 60 minutes to complete each search area
- This test will be performed double blind³

Building/area test

- 1500 to 3000 square foot structure(s) and will include area adjacent to the building(s) but no more than 2 acres.
- Handler will have limited access (~50 % - as determined by instruction by the evaluator)
- 0-2 target odors¹
- 1-2 distractor odors
- This test will be performed single blind² and observed by the evaluator(s)
- The team will have 30 minutes to complete this search

¹Target odors - may be either live human subjects or human remains .

²Single blind – the handler does not know the placement (or not) of the target odor but the evaluator may know its location.

³Double blind – the handler does not know the placement (or not) of the target odor AND the evaluator (if present) does not know its location. Double blind serves to eliminate any possible influence of any person in the search area.

Assignment of Number and Type of Target Odors

Random selection of number and type of Target odors

For 0-2 requirement - using a dice

- 1 or 2 = 0 target odor
- 3 or 4 = 1 target odor
- 5 or 6 = 2 target odors

Random selection of type (live or HR) of target odor(s)

- Even numbers = live human subject
- Odd numbers = Human remains

Random selection of live human subject and/or human remains when there are 2 target odors

- 1 or 2 = both live human subjects
- 3 or 4 = both human remains
- 5 or 6 = 1 live human subject and 1 human remains

Random selection of number of “distractor odor

For 0-2 requirement – using a dice

- 1 or 2 = 0 distractors odor
- 3 or 4 = 1 distractor odor
- 5 or 6 = 2 distractor odors

Target Odors Source Guidelines:

1. All human remains and distractor odors must be concealed and protected.
2. All live human subjects must be concealed and not visible at a distance of 5 meters
3. Any significant disturbance of a Human remains, distractor target or significant inappropriate molestation of the live human subject will be a failure of the test.
4. Human remains target odors:
 - a. Will range from 30 – 100 grams
 - b. Will range from relative little decomposition to active decomposition
 - c. Must contain tissue and/or bone and may not be only blood.

Distractor Odors Source Guidelines:

- a. animal feces
- b. animal remains – horn, fur, “road kill”, etc
- c. nitrile, latex, vinyl or food handler’s gloves
- d. PVC and other plastics
- e. food items

Scoring:

1. All target odors must be located.
2. Dog must perform their handler described TFR with no assistance by handler.
3. No urination or defecation within 5 feet of HR target odor.
4. Absolutely no disturbance of HR target odor or immediate area (within 5 feet)
5. NO “non-productive TFRs” (i.e.: false alerts, TFR where there is no target odor)

All target odors must be found with no disturbance and no “false positive” TFRs to pass the AREA SEARCH DOG ORT.

Guidelines for Odor Placement Coordinator

1. In charge of determining numbers and placement of target odors and distractor odors.
2. In charge of obtaining and controlling target odors and distractor odors.
3. Responsible for proper handling and security of human remains targets and distractor odors in a manner that does not allow for any cross-contamination.
4. Provides an observer to accompany the team who does not know location of HR target odor (or absence of that odor or presence of a distractor odor) who will report:
 - a. Disturbance of area around TFR
 - b. Confirm the dog performed the handler described TFR without handler assistance.
 - c. Handler did not attempt to visualize the odor source (i.e.: no digging, opening of doors, etc.)
5. This document will be regularly reviewed and revised as necessary.