



Police Service Dog Certification

To be eligible to certify a k-9, one must be a full-time paid law enforcement officer, or corrections officer either local, state, federal. You may also qualify if you are a commissioned part time or reserve officers. Reserve or part time law enforcement officers shall upon request for membership provide a written letter of endorsement, on department letterhead, signed by the department head. This letter will outline the canine duties and responsibilities of the officer. Letter must be submitted each year. The membership is not valid unless a current letter is on file with the NNDDA. [No certifications will be conducted at the vendor's facilities.](#)

You may certify a utility canine in tracking, area search, building search, or evidence recovery.

To certify a police service dog, you must pass temperament test, obedience, criminal apprehension, building and area search.

If your Department has a written standard operating procedure that a canine must wear an electric collar to be deployed in the field, then that e-collar maybe worn during the criminal apprehension phase of your certification. You must provide the certifying official with a copy of your SOP and the controller for your e-collar. Electricity may not be used during the certification.

TEMPERAMENT TEST

The canine must demonstrate to the certifying official that it is approachable by the certifying official. This will determine if the canine has a proper level of social skills required by a police service canine.

The certifying official will approach the canine team at a normal pace from the front, stopping 8 to 10 feet from the canine team, then walking at an angle away from the canine team. At no time will the certifying official attempt to touch the handler or the canine.

Unacceptable behavior would be, but not limited to, one of the following:

Lunging

Uncontrollable barking

Over-aggressiveness

This phase must be completed successfully before moving on to the next phase.

OBEDIENCE

The obedience testing will be conducted outdoors in an area acceptable to the certifying official. The area must be free of any obstacles and must provide a safe environment to both the canine team and any person(s) in the immediate area.

The obedience test shall be conducted off leash.

The canine team will demonstrate the ability to complete the following exercises:

- a) The heeling phase will consist of a normal pace, a fast pace, and a slow pace.
- b) A minimum of two (2) right turns, two (2) left turns and two (2) about turns.

The distance of each leg will be determined by the certifying official.

- c) **This exercise requires the handler to place his/her dog in a sit/down position.**

Upon instruction from the certifying official, the handler will leave his/her dog and move to a predetermined location and then turn and face his/her canine.

At that point, the time will begin for a two-minute sit/down-stay exercise.
The handler will turn and face his/her canine.

At that point, the time will begin for a two-minute sit-down-stay exercise.

The certifying official will notify the handler who will recall canine to a heel position ending exercise.

CRIMINAL APPREHENSION/AGGRESSION CONTROL

In each of the categories in this section the tests will determine if the canine can perform in situations likely to be encountered in a working dog environment. This test will demonstrate the handler's control over his/her canine and the dog's courage ability.

In all apprehensions the canine must demonstrate the ability to release on a verbal command. No contact between the handler and canine will be allowed

RECALL/MINIMUM FORCE TEST

The canine will start in a heel position. The suspect will be at a distance determined by the certifying official.

Upon command from the official, the suspect will break and run in a direction away from the canine.

The certifying official will then instruct the handler to deploy his/her canine.

At a predetermined location or on the command of the certifying official, the suspect will stop and surrender terminating the pursuit.

The call off used is at the discretion of the handler; however, the certifying official must be informed prior to the test which call off will be utilized.

The call off used may be, but is not limited to, one of the following:

Dog is recalled to a heel position

The dog sits, downs, or stands and is recalled to a heel position

The dog sits, downs, or stands and the handler joins the canine.

The dog goes into a revere or a hold at bay, bark and hold.

The importance of this test is that the canine will not have contact with the suspect.

Incidental or non-aggressive contact made by the canine is not a reason for failure. The suspect being bitten, mouthed, or an over aggressive contact is not acceptable.

This phase of testing is complete when the handler, upon command of the certifying official, takes control of his/her canine.

APPREHENSION

The handler, with the canine [secured by the handler's side or](#) in a stationary vehicle, will encounter a suspect at a distance determined by the certifying official.

Upon command of the certifying official, the handler will order the suspect to approach [the handler's](#) location.

The suspect will then refuse and break and run in a direction away from the canine team.

After the appropriate warnings are given, the handler will then release his/her canine to pursue and apprehend the suspect.

Once the suspect has been apprehended, the handler will then approach the suspect and the canine's location.

Upon command of the certifying official, the handler will command the canine to release the suspect.

The handler will then order the suspect into an arrest position and will approach the suspect.

[The handler will then do a simple frisk of the suspect while the canine remains sit/down-stay and on guard. The handler will then return to canine and place canine on leash.](#)

[The canine breaking from the down and engaging the suspect constitutes a failure.](#)

[This phase of testing is complete when the certifying official calls the exercise.](#)

GUN FIRE

At a distance determined by the certifying official, the canine team will encounter a suspect.

Upon command of the certifying official, the suspect will fire [two shots and then slowly depart the area.](#)

[The handler will maintain control of his canine as the suspect departs the area.](#)

Cowering, backing up, spinning or attempting to break free from the handler constitutes a failure.

This phase of testing is complete when the [when the certifying official calls the exercise](#).

EQUIPMENT TO BE UTILIZED IN THE CRIMINAL APPREHENSION PHASE

1. All equipment to be utilized in the criminal apprehension phase must be approved by the certifying official.
2. The certifying official must inspect all guns and blanks before they are used. The blanks used must be larger than a 22 caliber in all gun fire tests.
3. Hidden or concealed equipment may be used. If the handler or certifying official raises a safety issue, full bite suits or full sleeves with scratch pants may be used.
4. As with all the certification phases, safety of the canine and all person(s) involved will be of the utmost importance.

HELPERS

1. It is very important that experienced helpers are used in the apprehension phases. When possible, the helper will be unknown to the canine.
2. No canine team will be penalized for a mistake made by an inexperienced helper.

The certifying official will have the final word on all re-tests due from any such error.

STANDARDS AND DEFINITIONS

ENGAGE/APPREHEND

The canine must physically engage the suspect. The canine will be required to hold and fight the suspect. Failure to engage the suspect will be a cause for failure.

The handler should always demonstrate good sound tactics. Not using sound tactics will not be a cause for failure but should be addressed by the certifying official.

All three phases must be completed successfully for certification of the canine team.

The three phases must be completed in the order they have been presented above.

AREA SEARCH

The area search test is designed to test the canine team's ability to detect the location of a subject hidden from sight in a large area with no known track available to the canine. The test will also determine if the team is using wind currents to their advantage.

The suspect will hide in an area at the direction of the certifying official. As a rule, the suspect should hide fifteen to twenty minutes prior to the start of the testing. The area and the amount of time that will be allotted for the test will be at the discretion of the certifying official.

For the canine to successfully pass the area search test, the dog must find and give an indication as to

the location of the suspect.

Alerts can be, but are not limited to, one of the following:

Bark and hold (the canine should stay within a reasonably close proximity to the suspect.)

Engage the suspect (proper safety equipment must be in place).

Other alerts may be used but the certifying officials must be informed of the canine's response.

The certifying official will have the final say as to when the test is terminated. Failure of the test may be for, but not limited to, the following:

The canine refuses to search

The canine stops searching

The canine fails to give an alert at the suspect's location

If the certifying official feels too much time has elapsed.

BUILDING SEARCH

This phase is designed to test the canine's ability to locate a suspect hidden from sight in a building.

The suspect will be hidden from sight and in an area that the canine will have access to. The suspect may be hidden at any height and will have protective equipment if necessary.

The building utilized for the test will be inspected and suitable to the certifying official. Sites chosen should be, but not limited to, the following:

Residential buildings

Schools

Warehouses

Office buildings

The certifying official will choose the hide location of the suspect and will also pick the starting point for the canine team. The handler may follow the canine into the building at the direction of the certifying official. The search must be done off lead.

The canine must alert the handler to the location of the suspect with acceptable alerts being, but not limited to, the same as those used in the area search test.

The certifying official will have the final say as to when the test is terminated. Failure of the test may be for, but not limited to, the following:

The canine refuses to search

The canine stops searching

The canine fails to give an alert at the suspect's location.

If the certifying official feels too much time has elapsed.

OPTIONAL EVIDENCE RECOVERY/ARTICLE SEARCH

This test is designed to determine the ability of the canine in searching an area for items that may be contaminated with human scent.

The area for the test will be acceptable to the certifying official and will be chosen based on the factors listed below:

Safety of the canine and person(s) in the area
Vegetation cover to conceal the articles.

The articles or evidence to be utilized in the search should be, but not limited to, the following:

Handgun
Shotgun shell
Car keys
Screwdriver
Wallet
Credit card

The certifying official, for safety reasons, will examine all items used. The certifying official will also place the items in the search area.

Five (5) items will be placed in the search area with the canine team out of sight.

The canine must alert the handler to the items with an acceptable alert such as, but not limited to downing, sitting, or standing next to the items to be retrieved. The canine must alert the handler to three (3) of the five (5) items.

The certifying official may terminate this test for the reasons listed below:

Canine refuses to search
Canine stops searching
Canine gives two or more false alerts
Too much time has elapsed

OPTIONAL TRACKING OR ADVANCED TRAILING/SCENT DISCRIMINATION (IF AVAILABLE)

If both options are available, the team can select which option they would like to certify in. The Trailing/Scent Discrimination is for experienced team.

The certifying official should indicate which option the team certified in when filling out the paperwork.

TRACKING

This test is designed to test the proficiency of the canine to follow a track and locate a suspect.

If possible, the test should be set up in the area or location similar to a working environment.

The track will be in an area out of view of the handler. The track should be laid in a fashion consistent

with the path a fleeing suspect would choose to avoid being followed.

These routes would most likely be meandering and typically would not follow obvious routes of travel such as streets, paths or farm lanes for example.

The suspect will be a person unknown to the dog if possible.

The track will be at least thirty minutes old and will have one cross track.

The track should have at least three surface changes and a minimum of two turns.

The track will be at least 800 yards but not more than 1,000 yards.

The person laying the track will follow the instructions of the certifying official.

The final stopping point of the track will allow the person who has laid the track to be out of sight of the canine team.

Surfaces may be but are not limited to, the following:

1. Dirt
2. Gravel
3. Grass
4. Pavement
5. Woods or forest
6. Swamp

As with any of the phases, the certifying official may have to make changes due to circumstances beyond his/her control.

To successfully complete the tracking phase, the canine must locate the suspect to the satisfaction of the certifying official.

ADVANCED TRAILING/SCENT DISCRIMINATION

This test is designed to test the proficiency of the canine to follow a trail and locate a specific suspect. This is known as "scent discrimination."

If possible, the test should be set up in the area or location similar to a working environment.

The split trail will be in an area out of view of the handler. The trail should be laid in a fashion consistent with the path a fleeing suspect would choose to avoid being followed.

These routes would most likely be meandering and typically would not follow obvious routes of travel such as streets, paths or farm lanes for example.

The handler will gather scent material from the suspect prior to suspect starting trail.

Both the suspect and decoy will be a person unknown to the dog if possible.

The suspect and decoy will start and walk parallel to one another, keeping at a minimum of 6ft but no more than 12ft apart.

The suspect and decoy will walk in the same direction, making the same turns, but maintaining the required distance apart.

The suspect and decoy will not cross one another's trails.

The split trail will be at least 45 minutes old and will have one cross track. Cross track will be done by someone other than the suspect or decoy.

The split trail should have at least three surface changes and a minimum of two turns.

At the last turn, the suspect and decoy will turn in opposite directions.

The split trail will be at least 1000 yards but not more than 2,000 yards.

Both persons laying the trail will follow the instructions of the certifying official.

The final stopping point of the split trail will allow the person who has laid the assigned trail to be out of sight of the canine team. The decoy will also have a final stopping point out of the sight of the canine team.

Surfaces may be but are not limited to, the following:

Dirt

Gravel

Grass

Pavement

Woods or forest

Swamp

As with any of the phases, the certifying official may have to make changes due to circumstances beyond his/her control.

To successfully complete the scent discrimination trailing certification, the canine must locate the suspect to the satisfaction of the certifying official. An end article may NOT be substituted for either the suspect and/or decoy.

CANINE PROGRAM VALIDATION/CERTIFICATION

NNDDA will certify canine teams to a federal, state, or department standard. The team must submit a copy of the standard to the certifying official who must approve the standard prior to certifying the team. The standard must meet or exceed NNDDA Standards. The certifying official will attach a copy of the standard to the yellow certification sheet and retain it for future courtroom testimony. The certification will assist in validating other agencies' standards.

Certification is valid for one calendar year. There will be a thirty-day waiting period to attempt to certify again. All rulings by the certifying official are final.

TO BECOME A CERTIFYING OFFICIAL
IN POLICE SERVICE DOG

To be eligible to be a certifying official, one MUST be a full-time paid law enforcement officer, or corrections officer either local, state, federal. An applicant cannot be in the business of selling police dogs. These two requirements will not be waived. A certifying official retains their certifying official status when they retire from law enforcement.

If you meet the above requirements there are several ways to be considered for an interview. An applicant must be a current member in good standing with NNDDA for the last three (3) years. Proof of certifications and/or expertise must add up to four years of experience in the selected field.

An applicant should show a need for a certifying official in this area, have written endorsement from a senior (4 year) police service dog certification official with the NNDDA. An Applicant may produce written proof of four years of expertise with written endorsement from senior (4 year) police service dog certification officials of the NNDDA, or NNDDA Board Member.

Applicant must produce written support from his or her agency.

Applicant will request a certifying official packet from the Secretary of the NNDDA.

Applicant will complete the packet and return it to the Secretary of the NNDDA.

All information submitted will be validated by the NNDDA Board of Directors.

The Board will notify the applicant of the results.

Applicant must pass a formal interview with the NNDDA Board.

The Board will determine which seminar/certification the applicant must attend to work with a senior certifying official(s). That certifying official(s) will make a written recommendation to complete the process.

Certifying Officials must have access to equipment and training aids to conduct this certification.

Each certifying official must ensure that they possess a current copy of NNDDA Certification Standards and certify to that standard.

A CERTIFYING OFFICIAL MAY NOT CERTIFY A DOG HE/SHE HAS TRAINED THE FIRST TIME THE DOG TEAMS CERTIFY

NO CERTIFYING OFFICIAL WHO BECOMES A VENDOR OR AN EMPLOYEE OF A VENDOR CAN CERTIFY ANY CANINE TEAM THAT HAS BEEN SOLD, EMPLOYED OR MAINTAINED (MAINTENANCE CONTRACT) BY YOU OR YOUR VENDOR.

YOUR POSITION IN THE NNDDA CAN NOT BE USED IN ANY ANVERTISEMENT.

A Certifying Official may be removed from certifying official status by a majority vote by the Board of Directors.