



# Standard Guide for Minimum Training of Search Dog Crews or Teams<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Scope

1.1 This guide establishes the minimum standard for training of search dog crews or teams as it relates to their general and field knowledge, skills, and abilities specific to their use in Search and Rescue (SAR) operations.

1.2 Search dog crews perform searches on the surface of the land, including in mountainous terrain, alpine environments, and on inland water bodies.

1.3 This guide does not include the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to search in partially or fully collapsed structures, confined spaces, underground (such as in caves, mines, and tunnels), in mountainous terrain, in an alpine environment, or on the water.

1.4 This guide does not provide a theoretical basis for how a search dog crew operates; rather it describes the minimum knowledge, skills, and abilities required for a search dog crew to function safely and effectively.

1.5 A search dog crew is able to respond into the field and back country to locate subjects in the wilderness environment.

1.6 A search dog crew is required to have, at a minimum, the knowledge, skills, and abilities outlined within this guide.

1.7 Search dog crews are eligible to be members of Type I and II SAR teams or crews as defined in Classification [F1993](#).

1.7.1 Personnel trained in accordance with this guide may be members of Type I and II teams or crews of Kind A (Wilderness), Kind B (Urban), Kind C (Mountainous), Kind D (Disaster/collapsed structure), Kind E (Inland water), Kind I (Avalanche), and Kind J (Evidence/human remains), and may operate in urban and disaster areas that may be isolated or have lost their infrastructure.

1.8 Further training may be required before a search dog crew can fully participate on a particular *type* and *kind* of team or crew, based on specific local need, regulations, or policies.

1.9 Search dog crews shall work under qualified supervision, as deemed appropriate by the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ).

1.10 *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*:<sup>2</sup>

[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](#) (Withdrawn 2014)<sup>3</sup>

[F1993 Classification System of Human Search and Rescue Resources](#) (Withdrawn 2014)<sup>3</sup>

[F2209 Guide for Training of Level I Land Search Team Member](#)

[F3029 Guide for Level I GPS Wilderness Navigator \(GPS-IW\) Endorsement](#) (Withdrawn 2013)<sup>3</sup>

## 3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

3.1.1 *alert*—a characteristic change in a search dog’s ongoing behavior in response to a trained odor, as interpreted by the handler.

3.1.2 *bringsel*—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 *handler*—a person with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to control and direct a trained search dog.

3.1.4 *search dog crew or team*—a single operational resource utilized in SAR operations, typically consisting of one human handler and one dog trained to search for live humans,

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<sup>2</sup> For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, [www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org), or contact ASTM Customer Service at [service@astm.org](mailto:service@astm.org). For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard’s Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

<sup>3</sup> The last approved version of this historical standard is referenced on [www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org).

human remains, and human possessions. A search dog team or crew may also include a support person.

3.2 Other terminology included in this guide may be found in Classification **F1848**, Guide **F1633**, and Guide **F2209**.

#### **4. Significance and Use**

4.1 This guide establishes a minimum standard for the training of search dog crews as it relates to their general and field knowledge, skills, and abilities specific to their use in Search and Rescue (SAR) operations.

4.2 All search dog crews shall meet the requirements of this guide.

4.3 Nothing in this guide precludes an AHJ from adding additional requirements for its own members.

4.4 Though this guide establishes minimum standards, it does not imply that a search dog crew that meets the requirements of this guide is a trainee, probationary, or other similar term member of an AHJ.

4.5 This guide does not stand alone and shall be used with the referenced documents to provide the specific information needed by a dog crew or an AHJ.

4.6 This guide can be used to evaluate a document to determine if its content includes the topics necessary for training a search dog crew. Likewise, the guide can be used to evaluate an existing training program to see if it meets the requirements of this guide.

4.7 This guide is an outline of the topics required for training or evaluating a search dog crew and may be used as a reference in the development of a training document or program.

4.8 The knowledge, skills, and abilities defined in this guide are not in any particular order and do not represent a training sequence.

4.9 The AHJ is responsible for determining the best way to evaluate a person's knowledge. This may be by written exam, oral exam, demonstration, or other means specified by the AHJ.

4.10 Skills and abilities shall be documented by completion of task book requirements or by field demonstration under qualified supervision in accordance with AHJ policies and procedures.

#### **5. Handler Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities**

5.1 The handler shall meet the requirements of Guide **F2209**.

5.2 The handler shall be endorsed as a Level I GPS Wilderness Navigator (GPS-IW).

5.3 The handler shall demonstrate that he or she is equipped with at least the minimum personal equipment required by the AHJ to operate in the field as a SAR dog handler.

5.4 The handler shall have successfully completed, and shall maintain currency in, a canine first aid course, as required by the AHJ.

5.5 The handler shall demonstrate the ability to keep clear and accurate mission and training logs, as required by the AHJ.

5.6 The handler shall demonstrate the ability to collect and preserve scent articles for search work.

5.7 The handler shall have the physical capacity and agility to safely and effectively search:

5.7.1 In the terrain and environmental conditions found within the search dog crew's normal area of operations, and

5.7.2 For periods of time appropriate to the search type and area.

5.8 The handler shall demonstrate the ability to perform a thorough risk assessment before beginning to search. This assessment shall take into consideration applicable and appropriate national, federal, state, tribal, provincial, and local safety standards.

5.9 The handler shall demonstrate an understanding of the conditions that affect the ability of the dog crew to effectively complete their assigned task. These conditions include:

5.9.1 The dog and handler's physical condition, and

5.9.2 The effects of ground cover and terrain on the team's speed and coverage.

5.10 The handler shall demonstrate the ability to adjust the dog crew's operating procedures to achieve the highest probability of detection (POD) within the time allotted.

5.11 The handler shall demonstrate the ability to locate and identify on a printed map the following:

5.11.1 Route followed,

5.11.2 Areas covered,

5.11.3 Relevant meteorological conditions,

5.11.4 Location(s) of any clue(s), and

5.11.5 Location(s) of any alert(s).

5.12 The handler shall demonstrate the ability to communicate the crew's search efforts to search management. This shall include the following:

5.12.1 Route followed,

5.12.2 Areas covered,

5.12.3 Relevant meteorological conditions,

5.12.4 Location of any clues,

5.12.5 Location of any alerts, and

5.12.6 Estimated POD.

5.13 The handler shall demonstrate the ability to communicate to the dog, in a positive manner, the end or conclusion of a search or operational period. This may be in the form of a reward, such as play or food, a command, or an action such as removal of a harness, coat, etc.

#### **6. Search Dog Skills and Abilities**

6.1 A search dog shall meet the requirements specified in Guide **F1879**.

6.1.1 The extent of a search dog's obedience and agility skills shall be at the discretion of the AHJ or certifying agency.

6.2 A search dog shall demonstrate the physical capacity, agility, and endurance to safely and effectively search, with optimum performance:

6.2.1 In the terrain and environmental conditions found within the search dog crew's normal area of operations, and

6.2.2 For periods of time appropriate to the *kind* and class of search operation, as defined in Classification **F1848**.

6.3 A search dog shall be under the control of the handler at all times, in a manner consistent with local conditions and regulations.

6.4 A search dog shall be trained to indicate that it has detected the object of its search. This indication shall be one of the following:

6.4.1 A physical alert such as a bark, whine, or jump,

6.4.2 Capture of a bringsel, and

6.4.3 Another predetermined response that is known to, and can be described by, the handler.

6.5 A search dog shall, on command, leave a subject/object it has located and continue to search for additional subjects.

## **7. Keywords**

7.1 canine; dog crew; dog team; dog training; handler skills; minimum training standards; search dog

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