



# Alexandria Police Department

## Directive 10.19



# K-9 OPERATIONS

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### 10.19.01 POLICY/PURPOSE

It is the policy of this Department to use K-9 Teams to complement the Patrol and Investigative functions of the Department *including, but not limited to, locating individuals and contraband and apprehending criminal offenders.*

The trained law enforcement K-9 Team is a valuable supplement to police staffing. *Teams of handlers and canines must meet and maintain the appropriate proficiency to effectively and reasonably carry out legitimate law enforcement objectives.* Utilization of K-9 Teams requires adherence to procedures that properly control their use of force potential and that channel their specialized capabilities into legally acceptable crime prevention and control activities.

It is the purpose of this directive to provide guidelines for the management of the Department's canines and use of police canines in field operations. Additional information can be found in Police Directive 6.9, Appendix F.

**10.19.02 DEFINITIONS**

**K-9 Team** – Officer handler and his or her assigned police canine.

**Canine (K-9)** – Used to denote a trained police dog.

**Detector Team** – Police K-9 Team who have received specialized training in the detection of specific items (drugs, explosives, etc).

**Criminal Deployment** – Use of a police canine by a handler to physically arrest a criminal suspect. This deployment may constitute a use of force, which by definition is non-lethal in nature (Police Directive 10.32, Use of Force).

**10.19.03 RESPONSIBILITIES****[41.1.4]****A. K-9 Handlers will:**

1. Ensure the well being of their assigned canine and equipment. They will immediately report any illness of, or injury to a canine or any damage to equipment, to the K-9 Supervisor;
2. Patrol assigned areas on foot or in vehicles. They will respond to calls when directed by the dispatcher, a supervisor, or on their own initiative;
3. When not actually engaged in police action with the canine, handlers will carry out the regular duties of patrol officers, except for routine handling of reports and accidents; and
4. When not on assigned calls, they will stay active in designated target areas of the City or as directed by the K-9 Supervisor or watch commander.
5. Not perform any medical procedures on their assigned canine without instructions from an attending veterinarian. This does not include routine care for their canine.
6. Forward all veterinary paperwork to the K-9 Supervisor within 24 hours of the veterinary appointment.
7. *Ensure their assigned canine certifies, at least annually, to a standard set by the United States Police Canine Association (USPCA) or other recognized canine certification standard, in the following areas: Obedience, Criminal Apprehension, Tracking, Area/Article Search, and Specialty Detection (if applicable).*

*Failure to certify in the aforementioned areas will result in the handler and canine being afforded 90 days to remediate any certification issues. Within that time, handlers will demonstrate proficiency in the remediated skill. The proficiency will be documented and maintained in the handler/canine training record. Failure to remediate and demonstrate proficiency in an aforementioned area will result in the decertification of the K9 Team and potential removal from the unit pending consultation with the chain of command and the Chief of Police.*

**B. The K-9 Supervisor will:**

1. Supervise, assign and ensure all K-9 teams attend training and are properly trained;
2. Ensure training files are kept and maintained on the Department's local area network (LAN);
3. Maintain all lesson plans;
4. Conduct periodic inspections of handlers, canines, and equipment;
5. Notify the *unit commander*, or designee, of issues relating to K-9 Teams; and
6. Make recommendations to the Chief of Police, through channels, for the acquisition, *assignment, and retirement* of police canines.
7. *Being that a new police canine is a vast commitment for both the Department and the employee, upon the retirement or untimely death of a police canine, the K-9 Unit Supervisor will review the K-9 handler's current status within the unit and the Department to make a recommendation to the Chief of Police regarding the handler receiving a subsequent canine partner. Criteria for review will include but will not be limited to: performance evaluations, use of force review, physical and mental health, living conditions, time in service, time in unit, number of previous canine partners, etc.*

**C. *The K-9 Unit Commander***, or designee, will ensure that sufficient on-duty in-service training time is allotted to the K-9 Teams.

**10.19.04 PROCEDURES**

**[41.1.4a]**

**A. K-9 Team Utilization:**

1. K-9 Teams are available to conduct building searches for offenders in hiding; assist in the arrest or prevent the escape of potential serious or violent offenders (such as Peeping Tom, Indecent Exposure or other sexual offenses); assist with felony warrant service; protect officers or others from death or serious injury; track suspects; locate lost or missing persons, hidden instrumentalities or

evidence of a crime; and detect the presence of concealed narcotics or explosives.

2. K-9 Handlers will determine whether a situation justifies K-9 Team use and the appropriate tactical measures that should be taken.
3. Police canines will not be handled or given commands by anyone other than the assigned handler. Should the assigned handler be injured or otherwise unable to command the canine, another K-9 handler will be contacted immediately for assistance.
4. K-9 Handlers will consider the surroundings and circumstances when deploying their canines.
5. K-9 Team assistance will be requested through the dispatcher.
6. If no K-9 Team is on duty, assistance should be sought from neighboring jurisdictions. If such mutual aid is not available, appropriate callback procedures should be followed by the on-duty watch commander or supervisor. A callback list will be submitted quarterly to the Department of Emergency Communications (DEC) and a copy will be kept in the patrol sector commander's office. The list will be updated in writing as needed by the K-9 Supervisor.
7. *All requests for canine assistance from outside agencies must be approved by the watch commander and are subject to the following:*
  - a. *K-9 Teams shall not be used for any assignment that is not consistent with this policy.*
  - b. *The K-9 handler shall have the authority to decline a request for any specific assignment that he/she deems unsuitable.*
  - c. *Calling out off-duty K-9 Teams is discouraged and should be reserved for exigent circumstances.*
  - d. *It shall be the responsibility of the K-9 handler to coordinate operations with agency personnel in order to minimize the risk of unintended injury.*
  - e. *It shall be the responsibility of the K-9 handler to complete all necessary reports or as directed.*

#### **B. Apprehension Guidelines:**

1. Prior to deploying a police canine on a search or to apprehend a fleeing suspect, K-9 handlers will give a loud, clear verbal warning of their intent to release the canine. The only exception to this will be if a handler has a reasonable belief

that a warning will jeopardize the safety of the handler, a citizen, another officer, or the canine. *In the event of an apprehension, the handler shall document in any related report how the warning was given and, if none was given, the reasons why.*

2. *Police K-9 Teams may be used to apprehend a suspect if the K-9 handler reasonably believes that the individual has either committed, is committing, or threatening to commit any serious offense and if any of the following conditions exist:*
  - a. *There is a reasonable belief the suspect poses an imminent threat of violence or serious harm to the public, other officer, or the handler.*
  - b. *The suspect is physically resisting or threatening to resist arrest and the use of a canine reasonably appears to be necessary to overcome such resistance.*
  - c. *The suspect is believed to be concealed in an area where entry by other than the canine would pose a threat to the safety of officers or the public.*

*It is recognized that situations may arise that do not fall within the provisions set forth in this policy. Such events require consideration of the totality of the circumstances and the use of an objective reasonableness standard applied to the decision to use a canine.*

*Absent a reasonable belief that a suspect has committed, is committing or threatening to commit a serious offense, mere flight from an officer, without any of the above conditions, shall not serve as the basis for the use of a canine to apprehend a suspect.*

3. The K-9 handler will ensure the canine has properly targeted the suspect to be apprehended prior to releasing the canine for an off-lead apprehension.
4. K-9 handlers will be held strictly accountable for maintaining proper control of their assigned canine at all times. Handlers will ensure persons and/or property are not injured *or damaged* through negligence.
5. *If the canine has apprehended the suspect with a secure bite, and the K-9 handler believes that the suspect no longer poses a threat, the handler should promptly command the canine to release the suspect and/or physically remove the canine from the bite.*
6. *In all applications, once the suspect has been located and no longer reasonably appears to present a threat or risk of escape, the handler should secure the canine as soon as it becomes reasonably practicable.*

7. All employees will cooperate with the K-9 handler to ensure the efficiency of the canine and to minimize the risk of injury to or by the canine.
8. When a canine has been deployed to apprehend a suspect, officers will not approach the suspect, canine or the handler until requested by the handler.
9. Once a suspect has been controlled and/or contained by a K-9 Team, the handler will relinquish the physical arrest activities (searching, handcuffing, etc.) to other officers present, if circumstances permit. This is to prevent any unintentional injury to the suspect due to the close proximity of the canine.

**C. Reporting Deployments, Bites And Injuries**

1. *Whenever a canine deployment results in a bite or causes injury to an intended suspect, a supervisor should be promptly notified and the injuries documented in accordance with Use of Force reporting. The injured person shall be promptly treated by emergency medical services personnel and, if appropriate, transported to an appropriate medical facility for further treatment. The deployment and injuries should also be included in any related incident or arrest report.*
2. Any unintended bite or injury caused by a canine, whether on-duty or off-duty, shall be promptly reported to the K-9 Supervisor. Unintended bites or injuries caused by a canine should be documented in a Police Information APD-7.

**D. Building Searches For Suspects In Hiding** – A primary use of departmental K-9 Teams is for locating suspects in buildings or other structures where a search by officers would create an unnecessary risk. These searches will be governed by the following:

1. The building perimeter will be secured by patrol or other available police personnel. Doors and/or windows will not be opened, and no one should be allowed to enter the building.
2. Whenever possible, the owner of the building should be contacted to determine whether there may be tenants or others in the building and to ascertain the building's layout. An attempt should be made to call inside the business or residence by telephone if time and circumstances permit.

- [REDACTED]
4. If the possibility exists that innocent persons may be present in the building as indicated by circumstances such as the time of day, lack of forced entry, type of building, etc., the K-9 handler must take all reasonable precautions to ensure

innocent occupants are not harmed. Once a secure perimeter has been established, the K-9 handler should make a loud clear verbal announcement of the intent to search the building with a canine.

5. Upon entrance to the building, all exits should be secured and communications limited to those of a tactical nature. No one is to enter the building unless requested by the handler or until notified by the handler that the building is clear.
6. The canine should be unleashed during a building search unless there is an imminent risk of injury to innocent persons within the facility.
7. Before commencing the search, the handler will announce loudly and clearly that there are police officers on the premises and a trained police canine will be released unless the individual indicates his/her intention to surrender. A reasonable amount of time (approximately 30 seconds) will be allowed for the suspect to respond. This warning should be repeated on each level of all multi-level structures.

#### **E. Crowd Control:**

1. K-9 Teams will not be used for crowd control at peaceful demonstrations, nor should they be considered as primary response to civil disturbances unless dire circumstances indicate otherwise.
2. K-9 Teams may be used for civil disturbances only upon approval of a **watch commander or higher-ranking official** to protect life or property during a major civil disturbance that cannot be controlled by other means.
3. In these situations, canines will:
  - a. Be on lead at all times; and
  - b. Not initiate any direct action, unless it is to guard against an imminent loss of life or serious bodily injury.

#### **F. Non-Apprehension Guidelines:**

*Properly trained canines may be used to track or search for non-criminals (e.g., lost children, individuals who may be disoriented or in need of medical attention). This must be approved by the watch commander or higher authority prior to deployment. It must be determined that it is critical to locate the missing person in order to prevent injury or death. The K-9 handler is responsible for determining the canine's suitability for such assignments based on the conditions and the particular abilities of the canine. When the canine is deployed in a search or other non-apprehension operation, the following guidelines apply:*

1. *Absent a change in circumstances that present an immediate threat to officers, the canine or the public, such applications should be conducted on-leash or under conditions that minimize the likelihood the canine will bite or otherwise injure the individual, if located.*
2. *Unless otherwise directed by a supervisor, assisting members should take direction from the handler in order to minimize interference with the canine.*
3. *Throughout the deployment, the handler should periodically give verbal assurances that the canine will not bite or hurt the individual and encourage the individual to make him/herself known.*
4. *Once the individual has been located, the K-9 handler should secure his/her canine as soon as reasonably practicable.*

**G. ARTICLE DETECTION** - *A canine trained to find objects or property related to a person or crime may be used to locate or identify articles. A canine search should be conducted in a manner that minimizes the likelihood of unintended bites or injuries.*

**H. Detector K-9 Teams** – Detector Dogs may be used to search for items they have been trained to detect. Their use is governed by current search and seizure case law.

**I. Tracking & Area Search** – Police K-9 Teams are available to track suspects or to locate evidence officers have reason to believe has been abandoned or hidden in a specified open area. Such searches are subject to the following conditions and limitations:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

5. If no other crime is involved, K-9 Teams should not be used to search for anyone suspected to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or the mentally disturbed, unless the risk in not quickly finding the individual is greater than the potential harm from an unintentional canine bite.



6. On-scene supervisory personnel will:
  - a. Secure the perimeter of the area to be searched; and
  - b. Secure the integrity of the area to be searched by keeping all personnel out of the area.

**By Authority Of:**

**Michael L. Brown**  
**Chief of Police**