



San Diego County Sheriff

Training Bulletin

William D. Gore, Sheriff

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Tracking Responsibilities for Cover Partners with a Sheriff's Canine

Whether it's a vehicle pursuit that just ended, or a subject that fled from deputies, a sheriff's canine is an essential tool that is available to deputies. Deputies need to make an important decision on whether to continue to pursue the subject or contain them and call for a canine.

Although canines are a useful locating tool, they can be used in many different situations. This training focuses on the responsibilities of each deputy while working with a tracking canine.

Once the request has been made for a canine, it is essential that a perimeter be established immediately and that air support be requested, if available. While enroute, the canine handler may request a criminal history be conducted on the individual. It is also extremely important that deputies refrain from searching in the area they want the canine team to search. This will allow for the best possible outcome for the responding canine team.

Canine handlers have specific criteria as to when they can deploy their canine partners in order to apprehend a suspect:

- For the protection of the handler, other law enforcement officers and citizens.
- To locate, apprehend or control a felony suspect when it would be unsafe for the deputies to proceed into the area.
- To locate, apprehend or control armed misdemeanor suspects.
- To search for narcotics.
- For crowd control.
- For the protection of detention deputies during prisoner movement.
- Article searches.

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Upon the arrival of the canine handler, they will request a brief from the primary deputy. The canine handler will need several pieces of important information that will assist in locating the suspect.

- Crime Type?
- Is the suspect known to deputies and what's the suspect description?
- The last known direction of travel?
- Number of occupants in the vehicle?
- Any weapons?
- Did anyone chase the suspect?
- Has air support be requested?
- Has a perimeter been set?

The deployment of a canine can be a use of force. Prior to deploying a canine, all canine handlers should consider the interests at stake by assessing the following factors: (Graham v Connor)

- The severity of the crime committed by the suspect.
- The degree and immediacy of the suspect's threatening actions against officers and the public.
- Where the suspect is actively resisting arrest or apprehension attempts, either by force or flight.

Once the canine handler has made the decision to start tracking for the suspect, they will form a search team. The search team will consist of a minimum of two deputies, but three is preferred. Prior to the start of the track the canine handler will give a pre-deployment brief with all deputies involved in the track.

During the brief the canine handler will designate one deputy as lethal cover and the second for radio traffic and arrest and control. If a third deputy is part of the search team they will be assigned as less lethal cover. The canine handler will ask every deputy involved in the track if they are comfortable working around dogs. If at any point during the brief the canine handler feels uncomfortable with the deputy's answers or actions, they will be substituted with another deputy.

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During the brief the canine handler will explain the responsibilities of the cover deputies if the canine were to make a contact or non-contact apprehension. **All commands to the suspect will be given by the canine handler.**

Once the canine handler and search team are prepared to start the track, the deputy assigned to the radio will advise dispatch of the start location and initial direction of the track (east, west, etc.). The canine handler will give two canine announcements, allowing the suspect the opportunity to give up prior to the canine being deployed. The canine handler will confirm over the radio with the perimeter units that the canine announcements were audible. As the track begins, the canine handler's main responsibility is to watch their canine and look for any changes in behavior.

It is imperative that the cover deputies are aware of their surroundings at all times **and remain as quiet as possible during the track.** If at any time during the track the canine handler feels the cover deputies' positions need to be readjusted, he/she will let them know. The cover deputies should flank the canine handler and stay at a safe distance behind. This will allow the canine to work and will minimize the cover deputies becoming a distraction to the canine.

During the track it is extremely important to maintain the same pace as the canine handler. The canine handler will be focused on the canine and quite possibly will not have his weapon out. If the search team was to encounter a deadly force situation, it will be the **cover deputies' responsibility to engage the suspect** and protect the handler until they can return fire and get to cover. If during the track the suspect is seen by anyone on the search team or perimeter positions, the canine handler will be informed **immediately by radio.** The specific tactics regarding taking the suspect into custody at that point will be left up to the canine handler.

If evidence that is pertinent to the case is located, the article will be marked with a flag and the radio deputy will inform dispatch of the located article. The Canine Handler will evaluate the importance of the found article. The handler will decide to mark the article and return, have it collected immediately or post a person and wait for on scene personnel to collect it.

Non-Contact Apprehension

A non-contact apprehension is when the suspect is located and the canine is unable to take control of him/her by biting them. There are many situations when a suspect is found in this fashion.

The suspect could be hiding in a "high location" out of reach of the canine and the suspect could physically or verbally give up. The suspect could be hiding behind a locked door or under

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a bed or behind any object which may be inaccessible to the canine. In most of these situations the canine will alert the handler that he has located a suspect by barking.

The canine handler will communicate with the cover deputies what has been found. The handler will then either ask for further assistance in searching by opening doors, moving beds or obstacles, or let the cover deputies know he has visual confirmation of a suspect.

The canine handler will give specific instructions to each deputy after taking control of the canine. Each scenario is different and will require separate and unique directions. In most cases, two deputies will contact, handcuff and search the located suspect.

Contact Apprehension

Contact apprehension is when a suspect is located and the canine controls him/her by bite and hold technique.

Like the non-contact apprehension, it is very important to listen for the canine handler's needs and directions.

After the suspect has been located by the canine, the handler will begin to give the suspect directions. **Only the canine handler will give these directions.** After the suspect is compliant and/or secured, the canine handler will take control of the canine.

Prior to giving the canine the command to release his hold, the canine handler will coordinate how to take control of the suspect. The canine handler will tell each deputy involved where to move and what body part to take control of.

Depending on where the canine makes contact with the suspect, these directions may change. These scenarios evolve rapidly, so listen for directions and allow the canine handler to control their canine partner prior to moving in.

If at any time during an incident you are unsure whether a canine could be of assistance, request a canine team to respond. It is much easier to cancel a canine unit while enroute, instead of realizing you need a canine when it is too late. The canine handler will evaluate the incident and determine if a canine can be a used.

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