Search And Rescue Dogs

Risk Assessment

CONTACT DETAILS

IN AN EMERGENCY CALL:

Lead:	**Primary Contact:**
Participants:	

SERVICE/ACTIVITY DETAILS

Purpose:	**Date:**

Benefit: Develops strong partnerships between handlers and dogs for efficient teamwork. | Enhances emergency response by training dogs for search and rescue operations. | Improves scent detection skills to locate individuals in challenging environments. | Provides communities with highly trained canines for law enforcement support. | Saves lives by locating missing persons in disaster and wilderness situations. | Supports recovery efforts during natural disasters and emergency situations.

HAZARDS

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Aggression from other animals	Bites, scratches, infections, distractions from tasks	Ensures safety during searches in areas inhabited by wildlife or stray animals.	Train dogs in socialization and avoidance techniques; keep dogs leashed in areas with potential animal threats; carry deterrents to protect against aggressive wildlife; assess areas for presence of aggressive animals before entry; establish protocols for encounters with aggressive animals. **(ALL)**	Dogs, handlers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Burns from hot surfaces or flames	Thermal burns, tissue damage, pain, shock	Allows operations in post-fire environments where victims may be present.	Identify and avoid areas with active fires or hot debris; use protective gear if necessary; train dogs to recognize and avoid heat sources; monitor for signs of burns; provide immediate first aid and seek veterinary care if burns occur. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Cuts and abrasions from rough terrain	Paw injuries, lacerations, infections, impaired mobility	Expands the terrain dogs can navigate, improving search efficiency.	Condition dogs' paws through gradual exposure to rough surfaces; use protective booties in hazardous environments; inspect paws after each operation; clean and treat wounds immediately to prevent infection. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Delayed medical treatment for injuries	Worsening of conditions, increased pain, longer recovery time, reduced operational readiness	Maximizes dog survival rates, ensuring continued effectiveness in rescue missions.	Train handlers in canine first aid and CPR; carry emergency medical kits with wound care, splints, and hydration solutions; establish direct communication with veterinary services; set up triage areas for immediate treatment; transport injured dogs promptly. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Drowning in water operations	Fatal submersion, exhaustion, hypothermia, panic response	Facilitates effective search operations in aquatic environments.	Equip dogs with flotation devices during water searches; train in water retrieval and exit techniques; ensure handlers are proficient in water safety and canine rescue; assess water conditions before deployment; establish emergency protocols for water-related incidents. **(ALL)**	Dogs, handlers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Electrocution from live wires	Severe burns, cardiac arrest, nervous system damage, fatal injury	Enables safe searches in areas with potential electrical hazards.	Survey areas for electrical hazards; restrict access to zones with live wires; educate handlers on recognizing electrical dangers; coordinate with utility services to shut off power when possible; use insulated equipment to remove hazards if necessary. **(ALL)**	Dogs, handlers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Entanglement in vegetation or debris	Restricted movement, injury from struggling, panic response, delayed rescue	Improves search access in disaster and wilderness environments.	Train dogs to navigate through dense brush and rubble; use harnesses for quick retrieval if trapped; clear high-risk areas where possible; carry cutting tools for emergency extraction; teach emergency recall commands. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Entrapment in confined spaces	Suffocation, physical injury, panic response, inability to escape	Enables dogs to reach victims in collapsed structures or narrow spaces.	Train dogs in confined space navigation; use harnesses for quick retrieval; assess stability of confined areas before sending dogs in; maintain communication between handler and dog; establish protocols for emergency extraction if entrapment occurs. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Exposure to chemical spills	Toxic poisoning, skin burns, respiratory complications, organ damage	Expands search capabilities to industrial and hazardous locations.	Avoid areas with known chemical hazards when possible; train dogs to recognize chemical odors and avoid them; rinse off contaminants immediately; carry neutralizing agents in response kits; consult hazmat teams for safe operational zones. **(ALL)**	Dogs, handlers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Exposure to extreme temperatures	Heatstroke, hypothermia, dehydration, thermal burns	Allows deployment in diverse environments, increasing the likelihood of successful rescues.	Monitor weather conditions prior to deployment; provide appropriate gear such as cooling vests for heat and insulated coats for cold; schedule regular breaks in shaded or warm areas; ensure hydration is maintained; limit exposure duration based on temperature severity. **(ALL)**	Dogs, handlers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Exposure to hazardous materials	Poisoning, chemical burns, respiratory issues, skin irritation	Allows operations in environments where hazardous materials may be present, broadening the scope of rescue efforts.	Train dogs to recognize and avoid specific hazardous substances; use protective equipment when necessary; decontaminate dogs post-exposure; establish protocols for hazardous material incidents; coordinate with hazardous material teams to assess risks. **(ALL)**	Dogs, handlers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Exposure to infectious diseases	Parasitic infections, bacterial or viral transmission, long-term health complications	Ensures long-term health and operational readiness of SAR dogs.	Keep vaccinations up to date; avoid contaminated water sources; deworm and inspect dogs for parasites regularly; provide flea and tick prevention; disinfect equipment after each mission; isolate and monitor dogs exposed to sick animals. **(ALL)**	Dogs, handlers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Exposure to toxic fumes	Respiratory distress, poisoning, organ damage, impaired cognition	Allows access to areas where victims may be trapped despite environmental hazards.	Avoid areas with known toxic fumes; if unavoidable, limit exposure time; monitor dogs for signs of respiratory distress; provide immediate medical attention if symptoms occur; use protective masks if feasible; coordinate with hazardous material teams to assess air quality. **(ALL)**	Dogs, handlers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Falling from heights	Fractures, sprains, internal injuries, fatal falls	Enables dogs to access victims in elevated or multi-story structures.	Train dogs in navigating elevated areas safely; use harnesses and safety lines in high-risk zones; assess areas for fall hazards before entry; supervise dogs closely in elevated areas; establish protocols for emergency retrieval in case of a fall. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Falling objects in unstable structures	Crushing injuries, fractures, fatal trauma, debris entrapment	Enables searches in collapsed buildings where survivors may be trapped.	Assess building stability before entry; train dogs to recognize shifting debris; keep dogs on a short leash in high-risk areas; wear protective gear when necessary; work closely with structural engineers when applicable. **(ALL)**	Dogs, handlers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Fatigue from prolonged search periods	Decreased performance, overheating, risk of collapse, impaired decision-making	Maximizes search coverage and efficiency during critical operations.	Implement a work-rest schedule tailored to the dog's endurance; monitor for signs of exhaustion; provide high-energy snacks during breaks; ensure the dog is well-conditioned through regular training; adjust search intensity based on environmental conditions. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Getting lost in expansive or unfamiliar environments	Disorientation, prolonged separation, increased rescue effort required	Ensures effective searches in large-scale disasters or remote areas.	Equip dogs with GPS tracking collars; train for recall commands in challenging conditions; establish designated search boundaries; coordinate with handlers to monitor movement patterns; deploy backup search teams if separation occurs. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Heatstroke in hot climates	Excessive panting, collapse, organ failure, fatal overheating	Maintains the dog's health during operations in hot environments.	Schedule searches during cooler parts of the day; provide ample water and shade; monitor for signs of overheating; use cooling vests or mats; limit exposure time in extreme heat; avoid hot surfaces that can burn paws. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Hypothermia in cold climates	Shivering, reduced circulation, frostbite, fatal exposure	Ensures dogs can operate effectively in cold weather conditions.	Provide insulated shelters during breaks; use thermal blankets or coats; monitor for signs of hypothermia; limit exposure time in extreme cold; ensure dogs are dry before exposure to cold environments; provide warm fluids if feasible. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Ingestion of harmful substances	Poisoning, gastrointestinal distress, organ failure, allergic reactions	Maintains the health of the dog, ensuring continued operational capability.	Supervise dogs closely in environments with potential toxins; train dogs to avoid ingesting unknown items; carry emetics and know protocols for inducing vomiting if safe and necessary; consult with veterinarians for guidance on toxic substances; establish protocols for immediate medical attention if ingestion occurs. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Injury from sharp debris	Lacerations, puncture wounds, infections, impaired mobility	Enables dogs to navigate challenging terrains to locate victims.	Conduct thorough site assessments to identify hazardous areas; equip dogs with protective booties; train handlers to recognize signs of injury promptly; maintain a first aid kit specifically for canine use; establish protocols for immediate medical evacuation if necessary. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Loss of communication between handler and dog	Disorientation, reduced search efficiency, increased risk of separation	Enhances operational efficiency by ensuring coordinated teamwork in the field.	Train dogs to respond to visual and auditory signals in various conditions; equip dogs with GPS tracking devices in case of separation; establish backup signals for non-verbal communication; conduct regular drills to reinforce recall commands. **(ALL)**	Dogs, handlers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Noise from machinery or explosions	Hearing damage, stress, disorientation, panic response	Prepares dogs to remain focused in noisy disaster environments.	Desensitize dogs to loud noises through controlled exposure during training; provide hearing protection if feasible; create safe zones away from noise sources during breaks; monitor for signs of stress or disorientation; limit exposure duration in high-noise areas. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Overexertion in physically demanding searches	Heat exhaustion, collapse, dehydration, muscle fatigue	Ensures sustained performance in extended rescue operations.	Assess each dog's fitness level before deployment; alternate dogs in long searches; incorporate conditioning exercises into training; monitor for signs of overexertion; adjust pace and intensity based on conditions. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Poisonous plants or animals	Toxic reactions, allergic responses, paralysis, fatal poisoning	Allows safe operations in diverse natural environments.	Identify and map areas where toxic plants and animals are common; train dogs to avoid known hazards; keep antidotes and first aid treatments on hand; monitor dogs closely for signs of poisoning; establish immediate veterinary contact protocols. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Puncture wounds from debris or objects	Infections, deep tissue injuries, reduced mobility, pain	Allows dogs to search effectively in post-disaster environments with minimal risk.	Conduct thorough site surveys to identify and remove sharp objects; train handlers to monitor for injuries; use protective gear if required; carry a canine first aid kit with wound care supplies; ensure access to emergency veterinary services. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Slipping on wet or unstable surfaces	Falls, fractures, muscle strains, reduced effectiveness	Increases accessibility to challenging areas where victims may be located.	Train dogs to navigate different terrains; use traction-enhancing booties if necessary; guide dogs through safer routes when available; assist with harnesses and leashes in high-risk areas; monitor dogs for injuries after traversing slippery zones. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Stress from chaotic environments	Anxiety, decreased performance, increased risk of mistakes, behavioral changes	Maintains the dog's mental well-being, ensuring effective performance.	Expose dogs gradually to high-intensity environments during training; provide familiar objects or handlers for comfort; use calming techniques when needed; schedule breaks in quieter zones; monitor for signs of anxiety and adjust search conditions as necessary. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Toxic algae or contaminated water	Poisoning, neurological damage, respiratory distress, fatal reactions	Enables search operations near water sources while reducing health risks.	Identify and avoid bodies of water known for toxic algae blooms; provide clean drinking water to prevent ingestion of contaminated sources; rinse dogs after water exposure; monitor for symptoms of poisoning and seek immediate treatment if needed. **(ALL)**	Dogs	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Unpredicted risks	Illness, injury, death		Continuous risk monitoring conducted by all staff. Any unforeseen hazards must be reported promptly to supervisors or management, with immediate corrective action taken as necessary. **(ALL)**	All	**N/A**

NOTES

Extra notes & activity evaluation:

Completed by	Reviewed/Approved by	Risk Assessment Date	Review Required Date