



GENERAL ORDER OPS-14 K-9 PROGRAM

EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 18, 2022

This General Order contains the following sections:

- I. POLICY
- II. DEFINITIONS
- III. OPERATIONAL DEPLOYMENT
- IV. OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES AND INTERACTION WITH K-9 TEAMS
- V. BITE/INJURY PROCEDURES
- VI. TRAINING
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I. POLICY

It is the policy of the Howard County Department of Police (HCPD) to effectively use the police canine's superior sense of smell, hearing, and physical capabilities in support of police functions to apprehend criminal offenders and enhance the safety of police officers and the public.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. Article or Evidence Search: The use of a canine to find evidence or articles. Done on- and off-lead.
- B. Canine Apprehension: When the canine is deployed and has a clear and defined role in the capture, arrest, or surrender of a person. A surrender is based on statements or actions made by the individual during or after the arrest. The mere presence of the canine at the scene of an arrest where the canine had no active role in the arrest is not a canine apprehension.
- C. Canine Deployment: Use of a canine on- or off-lead to search for Controlled Dangerous Substances (CDS), evidence, or a subject; to apprehend a subject; or for officer safety.
- D. Canine Search: Use of a canine to search for a subject. There are two (2) types of canine searches:
 - 1. Tracking: A handler deploys a canine to locate a subject who has fled a crime scene. This is done on-lead.
 - 2. Contained Search: Search for a subject in a contained area, i.e. a building or fenced lot, where a subject is reasonably expected to be hiding. This is done both one on- and off-lead.
- E. Canine Use of Force: A canine bite or injury caused by physical contact between a canine and a subject that occurs during a canine search or during a direct apprehension. Canine Use of Force is recognized as less-lethal force.
- F. CDS Scan: A canine search/sniff of an object, location, or open area to detect the presence of CDS.
- G. Direct Apprehension: When a handler commands their dog to bite and hold (Handler Control Technique) an individual that the handler has in sight.
- H. Drug Detection Canine: A canine that is trained to detect the presence of controlled dangerous substances (CDS).
- I. Dual or Multi-Purpose Canine: A Canine that is trained in multiple disciplines, i.e. drug detection, explosives detection, and/or apprehension.

- J. Explosives Detection Canine: A canine that is trained to detect the presence of explosive materials and compounds.
- K. Force: The use of a police canine consistent with this General Order to accomplish a Departmental objective is recognized as less-lethal force.
- L. K-9: Synonymous with police canine.
- M. K-9 Handler: Departmental member assigned a police canine.
- N. K-9 Supervisor: The Sergeant in charge of the K-9 Section.
- O. K-9 Team: K-9 handler and canine.
- P. Lead Trainer: A K-9 handler designated by the Deputy Chief for Special Operations (SOC) who is responsible for coordinating the activities of K-9 operations to include training, record keeping, and other duties as assigned by the K-9 supervisor.
- Q. Maintenance Trainer: A K-9 handler designated by the Deputy Chief for SOC who is responsible for assisting the lead trainer with monthly K-9 training and other duties as assigned by the K-9 supervisor.
- R. On Lead: Deployment of a canine with a leash attached to the collar or harness and the handler has positive control of the leash.
- S. Off Lead: Deployment of a canine with no leash attached or when a leash is attached and the handler does not have positive control of the leash.
- T. Police Canine: A single-purpose or dual-purpose canine owned by the Department and assigned to a K-9 handler. Police canines shall be trained in the "handler control" technique.
- U. Single-Purpose Canine: A canine that is trained in one (1) discipline.

III. OPERATIONAL DEPLOYMENT¹

- A. On-duty K-9 teams shall respond to the following incidents unless individual circumstances make a response impractical:
 - 1. Alarms (if available);
 - 2. Breaking and entering scenes just discovered;
 - 3. Foot pursuits where a reasonable suspicion exists that a crime has been committed;
 - 4. Lost or missing children and endangered subjects;
 - 5. Motor vehicle pursuits;
 - 6. Part 1 crimes in progress;
 - 7. Unsecured buildings; and
 - 8. Violent or potentially violent incidents.
- B. Incidents where a canine team may be deployed include but are not limited to:
 - 1. Area searches;

¹ CALEA 41.1.5a

2. Service of arrest and search warrants;
 3. Back-up for felony arrests;
 4. Back-up for potentially violent incidents;
 5. Building searches;
 6. Crowd control and civil disturbances;
 7. Evidence recovery;
 8. Explosive material and compound detection;
 9. Firearms detection;
 10. Narcotic/Controlled dangerous substance detection;
 11. Protection of law enforcement personnel;
 12. Pursuit/apprehension for vehicle and foot pursuits;
 13. Tracking; and
 14. Other in-progress crimes at the discretion of a supervisor.
- C. K-9 teams should not be assigned to calls on a regular basis other than those described within this order. The K-9 team shall supplement patrol but will not generally be assigned to calls that are lengthy, prolonged, require extensive investigation, or would cause the K-9 to be unavailable if needed.
- D. The K-9 team will not be limited to patrolling a specific District and will respond to any incident within the County where the K-9 is required or there is the potential for its use.
1. Due to the specialized nature of the K-9 teams, they are required to assist with special details and assignments involving any District, special unit, and section within the Department.
 2. Whenever the K-9 team is needed to assist with an assignment or detail, the K-9 supervisor shall be notified to ensure there is no negative operational impact.
- E. The K-9 handler shall have exclusive control over the use of the canine on any scene where the K-9 team may be deployed. The K-9 handler's assessment of the situation as it pertains to the safety and capabilities of the K-9 team will determine how the canine is to be used; however, the K-9 handler shall coordinate with the on-scene supervisor.
- F. If a K-9 team is required but unavailable due to leave or other circumstances, a supervisor may authorize the response of the on-call K-9 team or the use of one from another agency. If a call-out is requested, the K-9 Supervisor shall be notified directly or through Communications for authorization.
- G. Law enforcement agencies from other jurisdictions may request assistance of an HCPD K-9 team. When a request is made, an on-duty supervisor's approval is required for a K-9 team response.
1. HCPD canine teams shall never be used outside the state of Maryland unless they are operating under a specific Memorandum of Understanding.

2. The K-9 handler is still bound by the HCPD K-9 usage policies and reporting requirements.²
- H. Operational deployment of a K-9 team in a crowd control situation may be authorized by a Watch Commander or Commander.
1. A police canine may be deployed in such situations without the approval of a Commander or Watch Commander when a K-9 handler perceives an immediate threat of serious bodily harm or death to an officer or bystander.
 2. The K-9 handler will notify the Watch Commander or Commander as soon as practical after the situation has been stabilized.
- I. When a K-9 handler makes an arrest, the K-9 handler is discouraged from transporting the arrestee in his Departmental K-9 vehicle. The area supervisor will assign an officer to transport the arrestee to the booking facility if necessary.
- J. Police canines shall only be deployed off-lead to apprehend fleeing individuals consistent with K9 Handler Training and General Order OPS-11, [Use of Force](#). This does not preclude a police canine from being deployed on-lead to follow or track a fleeing individual until successful apprehension.
- K. All initial reports and supplements will be completed prior to the end of shift. Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis.³
- L. If a K-9 handler is injured and cannot control his canine, officers shall call for another K-9 handler or the K-9 supervisor to respond to the scene and take control of the canine.
- M. Requests for public demonstrations or presentations of a K-9 team shall be forwarded to the K-9 supervisor.

IV. OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES AND INTERACTION WITH K-9 TEAMS

- A. General interaction with police canines
1. HCPD members shall:
 - a. Not touch, handle, or pet any police canine unless given permission by the K-9 handler.
 - b. Not tease, agitate, or harass any HCPD canine.
 - c. Refrain from horseplay with others or the K-9 handler when the canine is present and shall not make aggressive gestures towards the K-9 handler.
 2. If a police canine is working, such as actively tracking, scenting, or apprehending, and the canine approaches a member, that member should stand still and make no overt movements.
 3. When a K-9 team is deployed for crowd control or a civil disturbance, officers should be mindful to maintain sufficient distance from the police canine and should avoid any physical contact with the K-9 team.
 4. Officers should never approach the immediate vicinity of a K-9 team without first announcing to the K-9 handler that they are approaching.

² CALEA 41.1.5a

³ CALEA 41.1.5i

- B. Member responsibilities and interaction with police canines during location and apprehension searches
1. When a suspect has fled the scene of a crime and a K-9 team is en route, the officer should not pursue unless a reasonable chance of apprehension exists.
 - a. If the pursuing officer loses sight of the suspect the pursuit should be immediately terminated, and a perimeter established and held for the K-9 team's arrival.
 - b. The officer involved in the initial pursuit should note where the suspect was last observed and the direction of travel.
 2. Officers at the scene shall contain the area to the extent possible to prevent the escape of the suspect and maintain perimeter security until notified by a supervisor.
 3. Officers shall avoid contaminating the search area prior to the completion of the K-9 team's search.
 - a. If officers have entered the search area or building prior to the K-9 team's arrival, they should ensure that all officers are out of the area prior to the K-9 team's search. This contamination of the scene should only occur under the most exigent circumstances.
 - b. The K-9 handler should be notified that the area has been contaminated.
 4. When the K-9 team enters a building or search area, another officer may be assigned to accompany the K-9 team at the handler's discretion.
 - a. If an officer is requested to accompany the K-9 team during a trail, area, or building search, he shall take a position to the rear of the K-9 handler and follow all instructions given by the K-9 handler.
 - b. Officers shall refrain from unnecessary conversation, stay clear of any doors and windows, and shall not enter the search area unless instructed to do so by the K-9 handler or a supervisor.
 - c. Officers shall avoid illuminating the K-9 team with flashlights, headlights, or spotlights.
 5. Once the canine has been sent to make an apprehension, other officers shall not attempt to take the suspect into custody until the canine has been called off unless directed to do so by the K-9 handler.
 6. Officer interference with a police canine in pursuit may result in injury to the officer. If an officer comes between a suspect and the canine, he should stand as still as possible and make no movements.
 7. In the event a K-9 team makes an arrest or apprehension as a result of its deployment, the officer handling the incident or another officer designated by a supervisor shall take custody of the arrestee from the K-9 handler and be responsible for transport and processing.
 8. When a K-9 team has been requested or is responding to an incident it is the responsibility of the officer handling the incident to cancel the K-9 team if its assistance is no longer needed.

- C. Officer responsibilities and interaction with the drug detection canine
1. Areas of potential deployment of the drug detection canine include but are not limited to:⁴
 - a. Scans of motor vehicles;
 - b. Establish probable cause for search warrants;
 - c. Drug interdiction in public places; and
 - d. Scans relative to search warrant execution.
 2. For incidents involving motor vehicles where the officer feels the drug detection canine may be needed, the officer on the scene should immediately request the K-9 team's response so the K-9 team may arrive in a timely manner. K-9 teams are not authorized to respond in Emergency Mode for a CDS scan.
 3. Officers should consider all circumstances surrounding the stop when determining whether to utilize a K-9 team. Factors may include but not be limited to:
 - a. Past CDS possession by the occupants.
 - b. Information known to the officer, i.e. Intelligence, ILeads, etc., to indicate the possibility of CDS activity.
 - c. Recent association with known drug offenders.
 - d. In or around areas with known drug activity.
 4. An officer considering calling for a K-9 team to do a vehicle scan may do so even if the occupant has an identification card or some other evidence indicating the person is a medical marijuana patient, caregiver, or other agent of a medical cannabis facility. Officers should consider the factors detailed in C.3. above and consult with a supervisor for further guidance before requesting the K-9 scan under these circumstances.
 5. When a motor vehicle is being scanned by a drug detection canine, it is the officer's responsibility to situate and control the vehicle's occupants in a manner that will not jeopardize the K-9 handler's safety while conducting the scan.
 6. Marijuana Detection Canines:
 - a. An alert by a marijuana detection canine provides probable cause for a search of the vehicle alone under the *Carroll* automobile exception. It does not provide probable cause to arrest vehicle occupants (driver/owner or passenger(s)) and no occupant will be arrested based solely on the alert by a marijuana detection canine.
 - b. If a criminal amount of marijuana is found during the vehicle search, that provides probable cause to arrest the driver/owner. A passenger can be arrested only if the officer has probable cause to believe that specific passenger is involved in criminal activity.
 - c. A search incident to arrest of the driver or any passengers that have been arrested may be carried out only after proper arrest notification is made.

⁴ CALEA 41.1.5a

7. Non-Marijuana Detection Canines:
 - a. A positive canine alert on a vehicle by a non-marijuana detection canine provides probable cause for a *Carroll* search of the vehicle and the arrest and search incident to arrest of the driver/owner. A positive canine alert by a non-marijuana detecting canine does not provide probable cause to arrest a passenger. An officer may arrest a passenger only if there is probable cause to believe that specific passenger is involved in criminal activity.
 - b. The driver/owner will be placed under arrest immediately after the positive alert and prior to the *Carroll* search of the vehicle. A passenger may not be arrested or searched incident to arrest unless the officer has probable cause to believe the specific passenger is engaged in criminal activity. A search incident to arrest may be carried out only after proper arrest notification is made. All arrestees searched pursuant to a positive canine alert by a non-marijuana detection canine must be properly notified that they are under arrest and arrest forms shall be completed.
 - c. After arrest and search of the driver/owner or passengers, the vehicle will then be searched.
 - d. If the decision is made to release any of these arrestees no formal charges will be pursued. Officers will refer to General Order OPS-04A, [Adult Arrest Procedures](#), Release without Prosecution.
8. If the officer requesting a K-9 team determines there is no longer a need for the K-9 team to respond, the officer at the scene shall make the appropriate cancellation.

D. Officer responsibilities and interaction with the explosives detection canine

1. When requesting an explosives detection canine, officers and supervisors should follow the criteria set forth in General Order OPS-35, [Unusual Occurrences](#).
2. The supervisor on scene should brief the explosive detection canine handler and provide the following information:
 - a. When and how the bomb threat was received;
 - b. Detonation time, if given;
 - c. Location of suspected device;
 - d. Any information provided by the suspect, such as the type of device and motive for placement; and
 - e. History of bomb threats or related activities.
3. The investigating officer or supervisor should attempt to ascertain if any hazards, including environmental, biological, structural, etc., are present in the area where the explosives detection canine is to search and advise the K-9 handler before the team is deployed.
4. When a location is to be searched by the explosives detection canine the area supervisor shall ensure that a representative who is familiar with and has access to all areas within the location is available to accompany the K-9 team.
5. If an officer accompanies the explosives detection canine team during the search, the officer will follow all directions given by the K-9 handler relating to the search.

6. A positive alert during an explosive K-9 scan provides reasonable suspicion and should only be used as a tool for building probable cause and not be the sole reason for an arrest.

V. BITE/INJURY PROCEDURES⁵

- A. If a bite or injury results from the use or deployment of the police canine the following procedures shall be followed, as well as criteria set forth in General Order OPS-11, [Use of Force](#).
- B. The injured person shall be provided with medical care as soon as practical.
- C. The K-9 handler will make immediate notification to the Watch Commander, area supervisor, and K-9 supervisor.
 1. If available, the K-9 supervisor shall respond and personally view the injury, take a statement from the injured person, ensure that the bite or injury area is photographed even if no bite or injury is immediately visible, and document their observations.
 2. If the K-9 supervisor is unavailable, an on-duty supervisor shall perform these duties.
- D. Within 24 hours, the K-9 handler shall complete and submit to the K-9 supervisor the police report or supplement detailing the facts regarding the bite or injury and use of force and the Use of Force forms.
- E. A Copy of the Incident Report, HCPD Form 1930, DF-2 Notice for K9 Bite, and HCPD Form 1940, Certified Police Canine Bite Report, shall be faxed to the Howard County Health Department, Environmental Services at 410-313-2648.
- F. The K-9 supervisor shall ensure that a copy of all forms and reports with supervisory endorsements are forwarded to the Deputy Chief for SOC.
- G. The K-9 supervisor shall ensure that a copy of all forms and reports are sent to Risk Management within 24-hours.

VI. K-9 TRAINING⁶

- A. The Lead Trainer will be responsible for conducting and scheduling K-9 training.
- B. The Maintenance Trainer will assist the Lead Trainer and will provide maintenance training to K-9 teams.
- C. Each K-9 team shall complete all required training as detailed in Standard Operating Procedure SOP K9-01, [K9 Ownership and Functions](#).
- D. When K-9 training is being conducted, the K-9 handler will notify Communications that the K-9 team is out of service, the hours of the training, and supply a contact number to allow for notification in the event the K-9 team is needed.
 1. A supervisor must authorize the call out of the K-9 team from training.
 2. If during K-9 training the K-9 team is notified that its services are needed for an incident listed in section III.B. of this General Order, training will be suspended, and the K-9 team will respond. Training will not be suspended for CDS scans unless exigent circumstances exist.

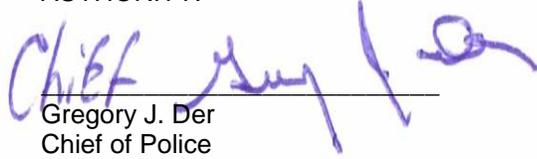
⁵ CALEA 41.1.5i

⁶ CALEA 41.1.4b

VII. CANCELLATION

This General Order cancels and replaces General Order OPS-14, K-9 Program, dated December 4, 2018.

AUTHORITY:



Gregory J. Der
Chief of Police