

## 86-037 Canine Deployment, Search and Force Policy

---

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

### FIELD OPERATIONS DIRECTIVE

Field Operations Support Services

---



#### CANINE DEPLOYMENT, SEARCH AND FORCE POLICY

**This policy replaces Field Operations Directive 86-37, revised May 16, 1994, by permitting the use of canines for Grand Theft Auto (GTA) suspect searches under specified circumstances. All other policies related to canine searches and the use of force remain unchanged.**

The prompt and proper utilization of a trained canine team has proven to be a valuable use of a unique resource in law enforcement. When properly used, a canine team greatly increases the degree of safety to citizens within a contained search area, enhances individual officer safety, significantly increases the likelihood of suspect apprehension, and dramatically reduces the amount of time necessary to conduct a search.

The following guidelines shall apply to all personnel involved in canine operations:

The following situations reflect suitable activities for canine deployments:

- Building searches where there is the possibility of suspects hidden inside.
- Searches of shopping centers, malls or other large structures where manpower commitments and search time will be extensive.
- Area searches for criminal suspects who are wanted in connection with activity described in Section C of this directive.
- Capture of suspects who are armed, or believed to be armed, when less lethal forms of apprehension are appropriate.
- Specialized security assignments.
- Specialized saturation patrol.

Except in extreme emergencies, canines are **NOT** to be utilized for crowd control situations.

Canine search teams can be requested through the Sheriff's Communication Center (S.C.C.) or the Special Enforcement Bureau (S.E.B.) Desk at [REDACTED TEXT] The opportunity for a safe and successful search operation will be enhanced with a timely request, response and deployment of the canine team. Station personnel are responsible for establishing an effective perimeter containment of the area to be searched. They are also responsible for ensuring the area is not contaminated by the scent from civilians, deputies or other police personnel.

Canine deployments shall be limited to:

- Searches for felony suspects, or armed misdemeanor suspects, who are wanted for **SERIOUS** crimes and the circumstances of the situation present a clear danger to deputy personnel who would otherwise conduct a search without a canine. Searches for suspects wanted for Grand Theft Auto shall be limited to those who are reasonably believed to be adults, and are reasonably believed to be the driver of a confirmed stolen vehicle. Known passengers, absent extenuating circumstances, should not be searched for with the use of a police service dog.
- Searches for articles, including weapons, narcotics or other property, which may have value as evidence in a criminal case.
- Special Weapons Team activations and other activities as may be deemed appropriate by the S.E.B. Unit Commander.

Generally speaking, searches for known juvenile offenders shall be limited to those instances where the severity of the crime, the subject's age and propensity for violence, whether or not the subject is believed to be armed, or other critical factors would reasonably justify the use of a canine search team. In these situations, a field supervisor and/or a canine supervisor must first authorize the use of a canine.

All canine handlers and deputy personnel assisting in canine searches shall abide by the Department's use of force policy contained in the Policy and Ethics Chapter of the Manual of Policy and Procedures. Deputy personnel shall evaluate each situation requiring a force application in light of the seriousness of the facts and circumstances.

In situations where a canine finds and bites a suspect, the concerned canine handler will as rapidly as possible determine if the suspect is armed. If the suspect is not armed, the handler shall order the canine to release the bite. Keep in mind that when the resistance has been overcome or the threat abated, the de-escalation of force is the appropriate response.

The handler will call off the dog at the first possible moment the canine can be safely released. When deciding to call off the dog, particular attention must be given to the perceived threat or actual resistance presented by the suspect. Handlers will continue to factor into their call-off decision that the average person will struggle if being seized or confronted by a canine. This struggling, alone, will not be cause for not calling off the canine. Without exception, a reference to the duration of the canine's contact with a suspect shall be included in the handler's supplemental report.

In instances where a dog bite occurs, the facts shall be reported by the concerned canine handler to a Canine Services Detail (C.S.D.) supervisor and an immediate follow-up investigation shall be conducted. This reporting and investigation requirement is in addition to the verbal report that deputy personnel are required to make to station watch commanders whenever any force is utilized. The C.S.D. sergeant shall also notify the on-call Internal Affairs Bureau (I.A.B.) response team lieutenant of the use of force by the canine handler. If the injuries to the suspect require an overnight stay in the hospital or the injuries are, in the view of the I.A.B. lieutenant, "significant," the I.A.B. force response teams may respond and conduct the force investigation. In these cases, the C.S.D. sergeant shall not conduct a force investigation. However, the C.S.D. sergeant shall remain and assist the response team personnel in their investigation.

Station personnel shall not describe dog bite incidents in their reports. However, they will make reference to the supplemental report(s) written by the canine handler in their reports. Photographs of any injuries which may have been inflicted by a Department canine shall be the primary responsibility of the C.S.D. supervisor and canine handler. Such photographs shall be maintained at the S.E.B.

Safety is of paramount concern. Canines are trained to protect their handlers and may react to perceived threats. Personnel should not enter or reach inside canine vehicles when the dog is inside, nor approach canine handlers abruptly. During search operations, personnel should follow the instructions of the canine handler and avoid any action which might jeopardize the safety of those involved in the operation. When a suspect is located, the handler will advise when it is safe to approach and take a suspect into custody.

Most requests for a canine team will justify the use of a Code 3 response. Canine personnel shall adhere to existing emergency driving policies and are to advise S.C.C. when initiating a Code 3 response.

In all instances, a canine supervisor from S.E.B., and/or a field supervisor from the concerned station, shall respond to the scene of the incident. In those instances where a canine supervisor is not present, field supervisors shall monitor the operation and ensure Department policy is adhered to. The decision to make a canine deployment must be approved by the ranking Department supervisor at the scene of the incident. Generally, the canine handler will dictate the search tactics to be utilized and coordinate the deployment of assisting deputy personnel.

In situations where canine personnel are searching for suspects believed to be armed, particular attention must be given to the perceived threat or actual resistance by the suspect(s). Consideration shall be given to request tactical personnel from the Special Enforcement Bureau. These deputies have trained and worked closely with canine teams and are familiar with the tactics and responsibilities involved in a canine operation. This option will be proposed to the supervisor on scene and receive approval before utilization.

Prior to deploying a canine team, an announcement shall be made. This announcement is intended to notify persons within the containment area of our intent to utilize a canine team and to afford suspect(s) the opportunity to surrender to deputy personnel. The announcement shall be clear, loud and audible to all personnel at the operation and **SHALL BE IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH**. The utilization of radio car and helicopter public address systems will increase the likelihood that the canine announcement is heard. Containment personnel shall confirm hearing the canine announcements prior to initiating a search. Any exception to this policy must be fully justified by conditions and circumstances inherent in a specific incident which create officer or public safety concerns exceeding those that may typically be associated with canine deployment operations.

A recommendation to not make a canine deployment announcement must be approved by the ranking Department supervisor in command at the scene of the incident. A decision not to make a deployment announcement should be made by a lieutenant or higher.

When conducting area searches for suspects believed to be armed, concerns for the safety of search personnel may dictate that an announcement **NOT** be made. In these instances, the canine handler will advise the on-scene supervisor of the reasons for precluding an announcement and abide by subsequent direction. Individual handlers shall articulate the justification for not making canine announcements on a canine activation form and supplemental report. These reports shall be reviewed by the S.E.B. captain and the Force Review Committee.

The training and experience of canine teams from outside agencies can vary significantly. Similarly, deployment and force policies of other departments can be quite different from our own. As such, the use of canines from other law enforcement agencies should be avoided, **EXCEPT IN EXTREME EMERGENCIES**, which clearly dictate the need for an immediate canine search. When exceptional circumstances dictate the need to utilize a canine from another agency, the following procedures shall be adhered to:

- The unit commander, or their designee, from the station making the request must approve the deployment of other agency canines.
- When a canine team from another agency is authorized and deployed, they shall operate consistent with Sheriff's Department canine deployment policy.
- In situations where outside agency canines are used and a bite occurs, watch commanders shall immediately notify S.E.B. and request a canine supervisor. The canine supervisor shall respond and conduct an immediate follow-up investigation. Additionally, the canine handler from the outside agency shall write a detailed statement of facts to the watch commander, explaining the events.

Independent agency requests for canine assistance from our Department shall be handled by the city's pre-designated mutual aid Sheriff's station, which will make the actual canine request. In all situations involving the deployment of a Sheriff's canine in another jurisdiction, our Department's deployment policies shall apply.

Trained bloodhounds provided by the Los Angeles Search Dog Association are also available by contacting the S.E.B. desk. The handlers consist of reserves and civilian volunteers and shall not be requested to aid in searching for dangerous suspects. Use of the dogs shall be restricted to circumstances where there is a minimal probability of injury to the dog or handler. When a request for the dogs is received, their response time is approximately one-half hour, plus travel time, to most locations (they come from the Altadena area). Typical circumstances for which the dogs might be used include:

- Search Operations.
- Missing persons where extraordinary circumstances are involved, i.e., mentally retarded persons, specific medications required, etc.
- Critical age missing juveniles, where unusual circumstances or a crime are suspected.
- Backtracking from the location of a victim to the scene of a crime.
- Confirmation of whether or not an individual was present at a location.

**These dogs are only trained to track people and cannot be used to search for narcotics or explosives.**

Bloodhounds have the ability to follow a single scent, disregarding all others. Each person radiates a unique scent. This scent is suspended in air for a short time before settling to the ground and is easily located by the dog in a gentle breeze. When the scent settles, it clings to grass, shrubs, and remains in cool damp areas for an appreciable period of time. Heat and wind cause the scent to dissipate rapidly; therefore, time is critical. The more time elapsed, the less likely a scent will be available.

If it appears that bloodhounds will be requested, valuable time will be saved by performing the following:

- Determine the location of personal effects of the subject; clothing that has been worn, bedding, etc. If the subject is a child, toys or other objects may suffice, however, clothing is preferred.
- Do not allow anyone to touch these selected articles or enter the room or area where the scent guide(s) are located.
- Whenever possible, the selection and handling of the scent guide should be accomplished by the dog handler. If this will result in a significant delay, the following procedures will be used.
- Pick up scent guide with a clean metal instrument.
- Place scent guide in a clean plastic bag, paper sack or carton.

- Transport in a sealed container.

**NOTE:** It is imperative the scent guide is not contaminated. The dog, once exposed to a particular scent, cannot be effectively exposed to and work another scent for at least 24 hours.

- Obtain information regarding the last known whereabouts of the person sought, and have this information available for the handler, as it will determine where the dog will be placed on the scent.

At the scene, the handler will act under the direction of the officer in charge. Decisions made regarding the use of this resource shall be made by that officer.

Questions related to the utilization of patrol canines should be directed to the Canine Services Detail through the S.E.B. desk.