

Rocky Mountain Rescue Dogs, Inc. **Operational Air Scent/Area Test**

Purpose

The operational air scent/area test demonstrates the ability of a handler and their canine partner to effectively locate one hidden subject in a defined area within a prescribed time period. This test shall demonstrate the ability of the canine to search, to perform a trained final response, and for the handler to correctly read the behavior of their canine partner. It shall also demonstrate the ability of the handler to plan and follow an appropriate search strategy, download and upload GPS data and execute appropriate area coverage.

Prerequisites

1. Candidate in good standing
2. Request to test operational air scent/area form approved by governing board
3. Complete necessary checklist
4. Attendance at a minimum of two (2) searches
5. Training logs for air scent/area problems consistent with the level of training necessary to pass the test
6. Proof of completion of 2 formal dog obedience classes
7. Proof of canine successfully completing a nationally recognized obedience evaluation which meets or exceeds the American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen test.
8. Minimum of 6 months as a RMRD candidate
9. Proof of completion of Incident Command System (ICS)/Incident Management System (IMS) course, ICS-100, ICS-200, modules 1-6 or higher level course, NIMS IS-700 course and IS-800b, or higher

Test Criteria

1. The test consists of one (1) subject hidden in moderate terrain, within 160 acres. The team has three (3) hours to find the subject. The test shall be conducted during daylight hours.
2. The team shall have a level 1 test evaluator who is not their mentor following to evaluate handler and dog endurance, strategy and navigational skills. The evaluator shall not know the location of the subject (double blind). Re-certifying teams may opt to be unaccompanied.
3. The handler shall describe their dog's alerts, indications and trained final response prior to the start of the test. The canine must locate and alert on the subject independent of direction from the handler.

4. The team shall upload the search area from a computer to their GPS prior to the test and download the GPS track log to the computer upon completion and discuss coverage and strategy with the evaluator.

General Guidelines

1. The subject shall be placed at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the test. The subject shall remain in one location during the entire test and should be instructed not to respond to the dog. Care should be taken to prevent dogs from being able track the subject to their location.
2. The subject must not be someone that the dog has repeatedly trained on in any live-find discipline (trailing, area or avalanche); nor someone that regularly associates with the dog (i.e. family, teammates, etc.); nor someone who has recently (within 90 days) been used as a training subject for the dog. The subject should preferably be someone that the dog has never trained on before.
3. The evaluator shall conduct a briefing in which the handler shall be given pertinent information about the search scenario and answer any questions the handler might have.
4. The handler shall be responsible for formulating and articulating their search strategy. Changes in search strategy are permissible, however the handler must communicate their reasoning to the evaluator.
5. In the event that the handler sees the subject prior to dog's alert/indication, he/she shall inform the evaluator. The team shall continue their search until the dog alerts/indicates to the handler that they have found the subject and the dog demonstrates its final response without encouragement. The handler must continue his/her search strategy and must not lead the dog to the subject in any way.
6. Once the dog has located the subject, the dog shall demonstrate its final response. The handler shall mark the location of the subject on his/her GPS.
7. At the conclusion of the test, the evaluator shall be responsible to complete the appropriate evaluation form and debrief the handler on their performance.

Evaluation Criteria

1. Team is adequately attired and has adequate supplies, equipment and water for the team.

2. The handler plans and executes a good search strategy based on a correct analysis of the situation, the conditions and the detection capabilities of the canine.
3. The handler and canine demonstrate good working stamina for the complete duration of the test.
4. The canine demonstrates good focus on the task at hand. The canine avoids wildlife interaction, responds to the handler's corrections/commands and readily returns to work after distractions.
5. The handler recognizes and correctly interprets the behavior of the canine.
6. The canine demonstrates the ability to detect human scent and the persistence to work the scent from the point of detection to the scent source (the subject).
7. The canine demonstrates an easily identifiable, trained indication of a find (i.e. bark alert or recall/refind).

Recertification

Recertification is required every two (2) years. If a handler fails to certify as a Specialized Operational handler within one (1) year, the test is required every year.