

COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Subject: CANINE (K-9) TEAMS

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I. Purpose

To establish guidelines for the proper utilization of the Covington Police Department's canine (K-9) teams.

II. Statement of Policy

It shall be the policy of the Covington Police Department to develop and maintain highly trained canine teams to assist line units of the police department in the accomplishment of five main objectives: (1) the apprehension of suspects; (2) the deterrence of criminal activity; (3) to aid in the locating of illegal drugs that may otherwise go undetected; (4) to maintain high visibility within the community to build a sense of security among the citizenry and (5) to provide a deterrent to those who deal in illegal drug activities. The police canine teams will normally be used within the city limits of Covington and can be used in the following situations:

- A. Tracking and apprehending persons who have escaped or who are in the process of escaping from crime scenes, felony arrests or correctional institutions.
- B. Tracking lost or missing persons.
- C. Searching for criminals, evidence and controlled substances.
- D. To provide a strong psychological deterrent to certain types of criminal misconduct, including unlawful assembly.
- E. To provide assistance to other law enforcement agencies.

III. Legal Issues

- A. The use of a trained K-9 by it's handler in the performance of his duties may, depending upon the circumstances, be considered a "use of force" as stated in the written policy of this department concerning the Use of Force outlined in SOP P040 and will be the next above the use of OC Spray.
- B. The use of a specially trained dog is a valid investigative tool. The courts have held that the use of certain scent-enhancing instruments (dogs) to aid in the

detection of contraband or evidence in unprotected areas is a permissible search under the Fourth Amendment.

IV. Procedures

- A. The canine teams shall consist of canine-trained handlers and certified, trained police dogs (K-9).
- B. Ownership of dog.
 - 1. All dogs accepted for use by the Covington Police Department are the sole property of the Covington Police Department. Proper care and maintenance is the responsibility of the handlers. The officers assume this responsibility at the time the officers are assigned to the canine teams.
 - 2. All medical needs will be provided by an approved veterinary service as designated by the Patrol Division Commander.
 - 3. K-9s will not be used for any purpose other than official duties. Prohibited uses include:
 - a. Use for personal gain.
 - b. Entry in any dog show or exhibition, or registration with any society or organization without approval from the Chief of Police or his designee.
 - c. Use or permit the use of K-9 for breeding.
 - 4. The K-9 will not be utilized in an area where conditions exist that is adverse to the K-9's health or welfare. (i.e. hazardous materials, dangerous chemicals, armed suspect unless all other tactical means have failed).
 - 5. Upon determination that a K-9 can no longer perform a police service, the Chief of Police will make a determination on the disposition of the dog.
 - 6. Selection of Canine Handlers
 - 1. The K-9 handlers will be a certified police officer to qualify.
 - 2. Service as a K-9 handler shall be voluntary.
 - 3. Prospective K-9 handlers should:
 - a. Have an interest in dogs and their use in law enforcement.
 - b. Realize that K-9 handlers must devote more than merely assigned on-duty time.
 - c. Realize that, due to the time and expense involved in training of the handler and dog, changes in duty assignment will not ordinarily be made.

- d. Maintain themselves in physical condition as to enable them to perform the more strenuous assignments given to the canine teams.
 - e. Must have strong ability to make level-headed decisions and have self initiative.
 - f. Have adequate space at residence to place kennel provided by the department.
4. Handlers may be provided a take home vehicle based on availability and approval of the Chief of Police.
 5. Any tendencies to indiscriminate use of force are unacceptable.

V. Canine Handler Responsibilities / Training

- A. The K-9 teams shall satisfactorily complete the required training and be certified by law enforcement oriented K-9 trainer selected by the Covington Police Department.
- B. Handlers will maintain a regular training program. The K-9 handlers will document all training activities and maintain a record of the training.
- C. The handlers must be willing to use off-duty time to practice techniques and strengthen skill levels.
- D. Requests for additional training will be handled according to departmental policy concerning training.
- E. All training drugs utilized by the K-9 units are maintained in the safe located in the Evidence Room lobby. This safe shall be used exclusively for the storage of the training drugs.
- F. All training drugs shall be inspected, weighed, sealed and cataloged prior to use by the K-9 officers with the assistance of the Evidence Custodian.
- G. When the K-9 officer checks out drug contraband for training purposes, he will abide by the following rules:
 1. The K-9 officers will sign out the drug contraband from the K-9 Evidence safe using the evidence log book located in the safe.
 2. All drug contraband will be returned before the end of the tour of duty, upon the completion of training.
 3. When the K-9 officer finishes training with the drug contraband, he will sign it back into the secured K-9 evidence drop safe as required by the Evidence SOP.

VI. Canine Vehicle

- A. The K-9 vehicle will be a marked patrol unit equipped to transport the dog and maintain security for the animal.

- B. The K-9 vehicles will be assigned to the K-9 handlers as authorized “take home” vehicles. The K-9 handlers are the only persons authorized to operate the K-9 vehicle, under normal circumstances.
- C. The K-9 handlers will be responsible for ensuring that the K-9 vehicle is maintained as needed for departmental use.
- D. The K-9 handler must possess, at a minimum, a class C Georgia Motor Vehicle Operator’s license.
- E. The K-9 vehicle will be used, whenever possible, for the transportation of the police dog.
- F. The K-9 vehicle will also be equipped with any special equipment or items that may be required for canine operations and care, to include:
 - 1. Muzzles
 - 2. 6’, 12’, and 50’ traffic leads
 - 3. Leather agitation collar
 - 4. Chain choke collar
 - 5. Agitation whip
 - 6. Brushes
 - 7. Shedding blade
 - 8. Electric collar
 - 9. Medicine – Heartguard/Frontline
 - 10. Misc reward toys
 - 11. Water bowl
- G. Only K-9 unit dogs are to be transported in the K-9 vehicle. Transporting other animals in this vehicle will increase the potential of police dog contracting various diseases. **This restriction applies to all types of animals, not just dogs.**

VII. Canine Handler Assignments and Duties

- A. The K-9 handlers will be assigned to the Patrol Division and available to work with any unit or on any shift as needed.
- B. All rules, regulations, policies and procedures pertaining to patrol officers also apply to the K-9 handlers.
- C. The K-9 handlers have the responsibility of maintaining their K-9 at an acceptable level of proficiency. If at any time, the handler becomes aware that his K-9 is not at an acceptable level of proficiency, his immediate supervisor will be contacted so that corrective action can be taken.
- D. The K-9 handlers will work assignments and shifts as assigned by the supervisor.

- E. The K-9 will not be used in any manner to cause or appear to cause a threat to the general public.
- F. The K-9 handlers can only conduct public demonstrations with the authorization of the Chief of Police.
- G. Handlers will be held accountable for the actions of their assigned K-9, unless relieved of this responsibility by a supervisor.

VIII. Request and Use of Canine Teams

IN INCIDENTS CONCERNING APPREHENSION OF PERSONS WANTED FOR VIOLENT ACTS, THE K-9 HANDLER SHALL UTILIZE A BACK-UP OFFICER, WHO WILL ACCOMPANY THE HANDLER ON THE SEARCH OR TRACK.

- A. Officers requesting K-9 assistance during the K-9 team's on-duty hours shall be made through their watch commander.
- B. Requests for K-9 assistance during off-duty hours will be made through the watch commander on-duty. Being called in on off-duty hours will be considered as emergency callback.
- C. Watch commander/officer requesting K-9 assistance must ensure that the request is canceled if it becomes apparent that the need no longer exists.
- D. Requests for K-9 teams by other law enforcement agencies shall be made to the on-duty watch commander.
- E. The K-9 teams may also be used in certain situations not specified by SOP. In these situations, approval must be obtained from either the Patrol Captain or the Chief of Police.
- F. K-9 handlers will, at all times, follow the guidelines for use of force in SOP P040.
- G. The Covington Police Department's K-9s apprehend suspects by the method of "bite and hold" and will release on command of the handler.
- H. The K-9 handlers shall keep their police dog on a short leash or a tracking leash and under control at all times with the following exceptions:
 - 1. Certain building searches.
 - 2. Apprehension of a fleeing suspect that has committed a felony or serious misdemeanor.
 - 3. To protect a citizen or police officer from physical harm.
 - 4. During training exercises.
 - 5. Providing for the K-9's needs.
- I. The K-9 handlers, in conjunction with the watch commander, shall have exclusive control over the use of the K-9 in a tactical situation. The supervisors must bear in mind that a decision not to use the K-9 is based on the handler's assessment of the situation and the knowledge of the dog's capabilities.

- J. Handler killed or injured.
 - 1. In the event the handler is killed or injured and it becomes necessary to remove the K-9 from the scene, the watch commander will be notified immediately.
 - 2. It will be the watch commander's responsibility to determine the method of removing the K-9.
 - 3. Any attempt to remove the K-9 that may result in the K-9 being harmed or destroyed should be considered **ONLY AS A LAST RESORT**. If time permits, Animal Control should be contacted to assist in safely removing the K-9.
 - 4. The safety of the handler, other officers and the public shall be the prime consideration in the method and timeliness of removing the K-9.
 - 6. In the event the handler is injured to the extent that he cannot exercise control over the dog, any officer at the scene should attempt to divert the dog's attention in order for another officer to reach the injured officer and move that officer to safety, if possible.

IX. Drug Detection

- A. The K-9 teams will be available for detecting and locating narcotics or identifying narcotics contaminated contraband.
- B. During building/structure and vehicles searches for the detection of drugs, the following procedures should be followed for maximum effectiveness and safety of the dog handler:
 - 1. All persons on the premises shall be removed or placed in one room prior to the dog search commencing.
 - 2. All plain view drugs should be secured prior to the dog search.

X. Technical Procedures

The utilization of the canine teams are authorized without additional supervisory approval if an offense involves the apprehension of a fleeing suspect that has committed a felony or serious misdemeanor or poses a threat to human life, occurs in the presence of the K-9 handler and is within the boundaries of the City of Covington. Proper handler control procedures shall be utilized at all times. The police K-9 teams may also be utilized for the following purposes:

- A. Tracking Operations
 - 1. The pursuit of suspects fleeing the scene of a crime is initially the responsibility of the first officer on the scene. Once the officer has lost sight of the suspect, and justification exists, the officer may request K-9 assistance through the watch commander or supervisor.

It is important that the officer(s) mark the location where the suspect was last seen, so that the K-9 can pick up the scent as soon as possible. The area where

the track is to begin must remain uncontaminated. Therefore, unnecessary walking over the area shall be avoided.

2. The canine teams can be used to great advantage in searching for missing persons, physical evidence, or property which may have been recently handled. The principles regarding the marking of the location and protection of the scene are the same as indicated above.
3. Prior to searching wooded areas, the area should be isolated by establishing a perimeter. This will assist in preventing unauthorized persons from entering the search area and prevent a suspect from fleeing.

B. Building Searches

1. The K-9 teams may be utilized to search buildings believed burglarized and buildings occupied by a suspect endeavoring to escape police apprehension. Using the K-9 teams to search a building minimizes the probability of an officer being injured.
2. Prior to using any K-9 teams to search a building, an announcement must be given indicating the intent to use the K-9, unless it is tactically unsafe in a given situation.
3. The announcement shall be given three (3) times in a loud and clear voice when practical, and should be given over the police cruiser P/A system when possible. The K-9 officer will utilize the following warning: **Covington Police K-9--come out and announce yourself now or I will release the dog.**
4. During the search of a building, no one will be allowed to enter the building except at the direction of the handler performing the search.
5. Officers should not search a building if a K-9 team is responding. Officers should secure the perimeter and should not enter the building, unless ordered to do so by a supervisor.

C. Arrest/Apprehension of Suspects

1. Police canine teams may be utilized in the following:
 - a. To affect an arrest when the escape of a suspect will pose a threat to human life or officer safety.
 - b. To prevent the escape of a person(s) the police officer has reasonable belief has committed a felony or serious misdemeanor.
 - c. A burglary in progress call, should the suspect flee on foot or remain hidden in a building or structure or any other area that poses a threat to officer safety.
 - d. At felony vehicle stops that occur during his tour of duty when the occupant(s) pose a threat to human life.

- e. In special circumstances, the K-9 may be used at the direction of the watch commander to apprehend a person trying to harm themselves (i.e. suicide).
- 2. There may be situations, other than those listed above, where the use of the dog is justified, however, the following factors must be considered:
 - a. The seriousness of the offense.
 - b. The potential risk of harm to officers and others.
 - c. The suspect's actions (i.e. was the suspect actively resisting or attempting to evade arrest by flight).

XI. ESU and Tactical Operations

The K-9 teams may be utilized in certain operations to maintain perimeter control or clear a building of suspects. The K-9 may also be utilized in other tactical situations with the approval of the watch commander or ESU commander present at the scene when the K-9 is deployed.

XII. Public Relations

All requests for public relations demonstrations will be routed through the commander responsible for the K-9 assignment or the Patrol Division Captain.

XIII. Crowd Control

- A. The K-9 teams shall not normally be used at peaceful demonstrations.
- B. The K-9 teams may be used for crowd control upon approval of the watch commander to protect life or property during a riot or other major unauthorized gathering that cannot be controlled by other means. In these situations:
 - 1. The K-9 shall be short leashed at all times unless no other means are available to protect an individual from serious bodily injury.
 - 2. The handler shall not normally initiate any offensive action except to affect the arrest of a person who is violent, combative, or to guard against imminent loss of life or serious bodily injury.

XIV. Canine Bites

Dog bites inflicted by the K-9 shall be documented on a Police Response to Aggression/Resistance form and a supervisor will be summoned to the scene for investigative purposes. Victims shall be afforded medical treatment as soon as reasonably possible.

XV. General Procedures for K-9 Officers and Other Officers

- A. Officers shall refrain from approaching, petting or agitating the police dog, except during training and upon approval of the handler.
- B. Physical contact ("horseplay") between anyone and the handler shall be avoided in the presence of the dog, as it could be perceived by the dog as an attack on the handler.

- C. The dog is trained to apprehend, on command, fleeing suspects or suspects who may be attacking the handler or the dog. Should an officer be confronted by the dog, the best tactic is to stand still since any sudden movement or attempted flight may cause the dog to engage.
- D. Under normal circumstances, officer shall not attempt to interfere with or call off a dog which has been given the command to apprehend by the handler. Should the handler become incapacitated or incapable of controlling the dog, another officer at the scene must take action to ensure that excessive force does not occur or that innocent persons do not become injured by the dog.
- E. Officers assisting the K-9 teams shall keep loud noises, excessive talking or radio traffic to a minimum while the K-9 teams are actually working. If at night, avoid lighting up the canine teams with spotlights or flashlights.
- F. Any time the K-9 teams initiates a traffic stop and a search of the suspect vehicle becomes likely, a back-up officer shall be summoned to the scene to serve as a back-up for the K-9 officer.

This SOP supersedes any SOP previously issued.

BY ORDER OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE:

Stacey L. Cotton

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Chief of Police