

Canines

309.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes guidelines for the use of canines to augment law enforcement services in the community, including but not limited to locating individuals and contraband and apprehending criminal offenders.

309.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office that teams of handlers and canines meet and maintain the appropriate proficiency to effectively and reasonably carry out legitimate law enforcement objectives.

309.3 ASSIGNMENT

Canine teams should be assigned to assist and supplement the Patrol Division to function primarily in assist or cover assignments. However, they may be assigned by the Shift Supervisor to other functions, such as routine calls for service, based on the current operational needs.

Canine teams should generally not be assigned to handle routine matters that will take them out of service for extended periods of time. If such assignment is necessary, it should only be made with the approval of the Shift Supervisor.

For procedures related to Assignment, see the Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [General Utilization of Canine Teams](#) and [Public Relations](#).

309.4 CANINE SUPERVISOR OR HEAD TRAINER

The canine head trainer shall be appointed by and is directly responsible to the Canine Supervisor or the authorized designee.

The responsibilities of the head trainer and/or supervisor include but are not limited to:

- (a) Reviewing all canine use reports to ensure compliance with policy and to identify training issues and other needs of the program.
- (b) Maintaining a liaison with the vendor kennel.
- (c) Maintaining a liaison with command staff and functional supervisors.
- (d) Maintaining a liaison with other agency canine coordinators.
- (e) Maintaining accurate records to document canine activities.
- (f) Recommending and overseeing the procurement of equipment and services for the teams of handlers and canines.
- (g) Scheduling all canine-related activities.
- (h) Ensuring the canine teams are scheduled for regular training to maximize their capabilities.
- (i) Maintaining a file on each training aid utilized for the canine team.

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- (j) Ensuring the canine is properly secured in the event the handler is incapacitated in the line of duty.
- (k) Maintaining canine use reports and medical records throughout the life of the canine. Upon the canine's retirement, packaging and archiving the records.
- (l) Inspecting the canine handler's equipment at least once per month to ensure it is being maintained in good working order.

309.5 REQUESTS FOR CANINE TEAMS

Office members are encouraged to request the use of a canine in appropriate circumstances.

For procedures related to Requests for Canine Teams, see the Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [Primary Uses](#), [Communication](#), [Prisoner Transport](#) and [Patrol Deputies Assisting the Canine Teams](#).

309.5.1 OUTSIDE AGENCY REQUEST

All non-routine canine assistance from outside agencies must be approved by the Shift Supervisor or Canine Supervisor and are subject to the following:

- (a) Canine teams shall not be used for any assignment that is not consistent with this policy.
- (b) The canine handler shall have the authority to decline a request for any specific assignment that he/she deems unsuitable.
- (c) It shall be the responsibility of the canine handler to coordinate operations with agency personnel in order to minimize the risk of unintended injury.
- (d) It shall be the responsibility of the canine handler to complete all necessary reports or as directed.

309.5.2 PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION

All public requests for a canine team shall be reviewed and, if appropriate, approved by the canine supervisor prior to making any resource commitment. The Canine Supervisor is responsible for obtaining resources and coordinating involvement in the demonstration to include proper safety protocols. Canine handlers are responsible for completing the Canine Utilization report in Blue Team.

309.6 APPREHENSION GUIDELINES

A canine may be used to locate and apprehend a suspect if the canine handler reasonably believes that the individual has committed, is committing, or is threatening to commit any serious offense and if any of the following conditions exist:

- (a) There is a reasonable belief the suspect poses an imminent threat of violence or serious harm to the public, any deputy or the handler.
- (b) The suspect is physically resisting or threatening to resist arrest and the use of a canine reasonably appears to be necessary to overcome such resistance.

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- (c) The suspect is believed to be concealed in an area where entry by other than the canine would pose a threat to the safety of deputies or the public.

It is recognized that situations may arise that do not fall within the provisions set forth in this policy. Such events require consideration of the totality of the circumstances and the use of an objective reasonableness standard applied to the decision to use a canine.

Absent a reasonable belief that a suspect has committed, is committing, or is threatening to commit a serious offense, mere flight from a pursuing deputy, without any of the above conditions, shall not serve as the basis for the use of a canine to apprehend a suspect.

Use of a canine to locate and apprehend a suspect wanted for a lesser criminal offense than those identified above requires approval from the Canine Supervisor. Absent a change in circumstances that presents an imminent threat to deputies, the canine, or the public, such canine use should be conducted on-leash or under conditions that minimize the likelihood the canine will bite or otherwise injure the individual.

In all applications, once the suspect has been located and no longer reasonably appears to present a threat or risk of escape, the handler should secure the canine as soon as it becomes reasonably practicable.

If the canine has apprehended the suspect with a secure bite, and the handler believes that the suspect no longer poses a threat, the handler should promptly control and remove the canine to release the suspect.

309.6.1 PREPARATION FOR DEPLOYMENT

Prior to the use of a canine to search for or apprehend any suspect, the canine handler on-scene should carefully consider all pertinent information reasonably available at the time. The information should include but is not limited to:

- (a) The nature and seriousness of the suspected offense.
- (b) Whether violence or weapons were used or are anticipated.
- (c) The degree of resistance or threatened resistance, if any, the suspect has shown.
- (d) The suspect's known or perceived age.
- (e) The potential for injury to deputies or the public caused by the suspect if the canine is not utilized.
- (f) Any potential danger to the public and/or other deputies at the scene if the canine is released.
- (g) The potential for the suspect to escape or flee if the canine is not utilized.

As circumstances permit, the canine handler should make every reasonable effort to communicate and coordinate with other involved members to minimize the risk of unintended injury.

It is the canine handler's responsibility to evaluate each situation and determine whether the use of a canine is appropriate and reasonable. The canine handler shall have the authority to decline the use of the canine whenever he/she deems deployment is unsuitable.

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Assisting members should take direction from the handler in order to minimize interference with the canine.

309.6.2 WARNINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Unless it would increase the risk of injury or escape, a clearly audible warning announcing that a canine will be used if the suspect does not surrender should be made prior to releasing a canine. The handler should allow reasonable time for a suspect to surrender and should quiet the canine momentarily to listen for any verbal response to the warning. If available, warnings given in other languages should be used as necessary.

If a warning is not to be given, the canine handler, when practicable, should first advise the supervisor of his/her decision before releasing the canine. In the event of an apprehension, the handler shall document in any related report how the warning was given and, if none was given, the reasons why.

309.6.3 REPORTING DEPLOYMENTS, BITES, AND INJURIES

Handlers should document canine deployments in a canine use report via Blue Team. Whenever a canine deployment results in a bite or causes injury to an intended suspect, a Canine Supervisor should be promptly notified, and the injuries documented in the canine use report. The injured person shall be promptly treated by Emergency Medical Services personnel and, if appropriate, transported to an appropriate medical facility for further treatment. The deployment and injuries should also be included in any related incident or arrest report.

Any unintended bite or injury caused by a canine, whether on- or off-duty, shall be promptly reported to the Canine Supervisor. Unintended bites or injuries caused by a canine should be documented in an administrative report, not in a canine use report.

If an individual alleges an injury, either visible or not visible, a supervisor shall be notified and both the individual's injured and uninjured areas shall be photographed as soon as practicable after first tending to the immediate needs of the injured party. Photographs shall be retained as evidence in accordance with current office evidence procedures. The photographs shall be retained until the criminal proceeding is completed and the time for any related civil proceeding has expired.

The Canine Supervisor shall ensure the Maryland Animal-Bite Report and Rabies Quarantine Agreement Form is completed and make it available to the local health officer within 24 hours (COMAR 10.06.02.05).

For procedures related to Reporting Deployments, Bites, and Injuries, see the Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [Dog Bite Requirements](#).

309.7 NON-APPREHENSION GUIDELINES

Properly trained canines may be used to track or search for non-criminals (e.g., lost children, individuals who may be disoriented or in need of medical attention). The canine handler is responsible for determining the canine's suitability for such assignments based on the conditions

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and the particular abilities of the canine. When the canine is deployed in a search or other non-apprehension operation, the following guidelines apply:

- (a) Absent a change in circumstances that presents an imminent threat to deputies, the canine, or the public, such applications should be conducted on-leash or under conditions that minimize the likelihood the canine will bite or otherwise injure the individual, if located.
- (b) Assisting members should take direction from the handler in order to minimize interference with the canine.
- (c) Throughout the deployment when practical, the handler should periodically give verbal assurances that the canine will not bite or hurt the individual and encourage the individual to make him/herself known.
- (d) Once the individual has been located, the handler should place the canine in a down-stay or otherwise secure it as soon as reasonably practicable.

309.7.1 ARTICLE DETECTION

A canine trained to find objects or property related to a person or crime may be used to locate or identify articles. A canine search should be conducted in a manner that minimizes the likelihood of unintended bites or injuries.

309.7.2 CONTROLLED DANGEROUS SUBSTANCE DETECTION

A canine trained in the detection of controlled dangerous substances (CDS) may be used in accordance with current law and under certain circumstances, including:

- (a) The search of vehicles, buildings, bags and other articles.
- (b) Assisting in the search for CDS during a search warrant service.
- (c) Obtaining a search warrant by using the CDS-detection trained canine in support of probable cause.

A CDS-detection trained canine will not be used to search a person for CDS unless the canine is trained to passively indicate the presence of CDS.

309.7.3 BOMB/EXPLOSIVE DETECTION

Because of the high risk of danger to the public and deputies when a bomb or other explosive device is suspected, the use of a canine team trained in explosive detection may be considered. When available, an explosive-detection canine team may be used in accordance with current law and under certain circumstances, including:

- (a) Assisting in the search of a building, structure, area, vehicle, or article where an actual or suspected explosive device has been reported or located.
- (b) Assisting with searches at transportation facilities and vehicles (e.g., buses, airplanes, trains).
- (c) Preventive searches at special events, VIP visits, official buildings, and other restricted areas. Searches of individuals should remain minimally intrusive and shall be strictly limited to the purpose of detecting explosives.

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- (d) Assisting in the search of scenes where an explosion has occurred and an explosive device or secondary explosive device is suspected.

At no time will an explosive-detection trained canine be used to render a suspected device safe or clear.

309.8 HANDLER SELECTION

The minimum qualifications for the assignment of canine handler include:

- (a) A deputy who is currently off probation.
- (b) Residing in an adequate, single-family residence.
- (c) Living within 30 minutes travel time from the St. Mary's County limits.

For procedures related to Handler Selection, see the Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [Applicant Process for new Canine Handlers](#).

309.9 HANDLER RESPONSIBILITIES

The canine handler shall ultimately be responsible for the health and welfare of the canine and shall ensure that the canine receives proper nutrition, grooming, training, medical care, affection, and living conditions.

The canine handler will be responsible for the following:

- (a) Except as required during appropriate deployment, the handler shall not expose the canine to any foreseeable and unreasonable risk of harm.
- (b) The handler shall maintain all office equipment under his/her control in a clean and serviceable condition.
- (c) Handlers shall permit the Canine Supervisor to conduct spontaneous on-site inspections of affected areas of their homes as well as their canine vehicles to verify that conditions and equipment conform to this policy.
- (d) Any changes in the living status of the handler that may affect the lodging or environment of the canine shall be reported to the Canine Supervisor as soon as possible.
- (e) When off-duty, the canine shall be in a kennel provided by the County at the home of the handler. When a canine is kenneled at the handler's home, the gate shall be secured with a lock. When off-duty, the canine may be let out of the kennel while under the direct control of the handler, canine support team member or immediate family member.
- (f) The canine should be permitted to socialize in the home with the handler's family for short periods of time and under the direct supervision of the handler.
- (g) Under no circumstances will the canine be lodged at another location unless approved by the Canine Supervisor or Shift Supervisor.

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- (h) When off-duty, the handler shall not involve the canine in any law enforcement activity or official conduct unless approved in advance by the Canine Supervisor or head trainer.
- (i) Whenever a canine handler is off-duty for an extended number of days, it may be necessary to temporarily relocate the canine. In those situations, the handler shall give reasonable notice to the Canine Supervisor so that appropriate arrangements can be made.
- (j) Completing a Monthly Activity Report and submitting it through the chain of command.

For procedures related to Handler Responsibilities, see the Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [Reporting](#), [Responsibilities](#), and [Care of Canine and Issued Equipment](#).

309.9.1 CANINE IN PUBLIC AREAS

The canine should be kept on a leash when in areas that allow access to the public. Exceptions to this rule would include specific law enforcement operations for which the canine is trained.

- (a) A canine shall not be left unattended in any area to which the public may have access.
- (b) When the canine vehicle is left unattended, all windows and doors shall be secured in such a manner as to prevent unauthorized access to the canine. The handler shall also ensure that the unattended vehicle remains inhabitable for the canine.

309.10 HANDLER COMPENSATION

The canine handler shall be available for call-out under conditions specified by the Canine Supervisor.

The canine handler shall be compensated for time spent in the care, feeding, grooming, and other needs of the canine in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), and according to the terms of the collective bargaining agreement or memorandum of understanding between the handler and the County (29 USC § 207).

309.11 CANINE INJURY AND MEDICAL CARE

In the event that a canine is injured, or there is an indication that the canine is not in good physical condition, the injury or condition will be reported to the Canine Supervisor or head trainer as soon as practicable and appropriately documented.

All medical attention shall be rendered by the designated canine veterinarian, except during an emergency where treatment should be obtained from the nearest available veterinarian. All records of medical treatment shall be maintained in the handler's personnel file.

309.12 TRAINING

Before assignment in the field, each canine team shall be trained and certified to meet current nationally recognized standards or other recognized and approved certification standards. Cross-trained canine teams or those canine teams trained exclusively for the detection of CDS and/or explosives also shall be trained and certified to meet current nationally recognized standards or other recognized and approved certification standards established for their particular skills.

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The canine head trainer shall be responsible for scheduling periodic training for all office members in order to familiarize them with how to conduct themselves in the presence of office canines. Because canines may be exposed to dangerous substances such as opioids, as resources are available, the canine head trainer should also schedule periodic training for the canine handlers about the risks of exposure and treatment for it.

All canine training shall be conducted while on-duty unless otherwise approved by the head trainer or Canine Supervisor.

309.12.1 CONTINUED TRAINING

Each canine team shall thereafter be recertified to a current nationally recognized standard or other recognized and approved certification standards on an annual basis. Additional training considerations are as follows:

- (a) Canine teams should receive training as defined in the current Procedures Manual with the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office .
- (b) Canine handlers are encouraged to engage in additional training with approval of the Canine Supervisor.
- (c) To ensure that all training is consistent, no handler, trainer or outside vendor is authorized to train to a standard that is not reviewed and approved by the Office.

309.12.2 FAILURE TO SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE TRAINING

Any canine team failing to graduate or obtain certification shall not be deployed in the field for tasks the team is not certified to perform until graduation or certification is achieved. When reasonably practicable, pending successful certification, the canine handler shall be temporarily reassigned to regular patrol duties.

309.12.3 TRAINING RECORDS

All canine training records shall be maintained in the canine handler's and the canine's training file.

309.12.4 TRAINING AIDS

Training aids are required to effectively train and maintain the skills of canines. Deputies possessing, using, or transporting controlled dangerous substances or explosives for canine training purposes must comply with federal and state requirements. Alternatively, the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office may work with outside trainers with the applicable licenses or permits.

For procedures related to Training Aids, see the Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [Training Aid Storage](#).

309.12.5 CONTROLLED DANGEROUS SUBSTANCE TRAINING AIDS

Deputies acting in the performance of their official duties may possess or transfer controlled dangerous substances for the purpose of CDS-detection canine training in compliance with state and federal laws and in compliance with applicable state requirements (21 USC § 823(f)).

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The Sheriff or the authorized designee may authorize a member to seek a court order to allow controlled dangerous substances seized by the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office to be possessed by the member or a CDS-detection canine trainer who is working under the direction of this office for training purposes, provided the controlled dangerous substances are no longer needed as criminal evidence.

As an alternative, the Sheriff or the authorized designee may request CDS-detection training aids from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

These procedures are not required if the canine handler uses commercially available synthetic substances that are not controlled dangerous substances.

309.12.6 CONTROLLED DANGEROUS SUBSTANCE PROCEDURES

Due to the responsibilities and liabilities involved with possessing readily usable amounts of controlled dangerous substances and the ever-present danger of the canine's accidental ingestion of these controlled dangerous substances, the following procedures shall be strictly followed:

- (a) All controlled dangerous substance training samples shall be weighed and tested prior to dispensing to the individual canine handler or trainer.
- (b) The weight and test results shall be recorded and maintained by this office.
- (c) Any person possessing controlled dangerous substance training samples pursuant to court order or DEA registration shall maintain custody and control of the controlled dangerous substances and shall keep records regarding any loss of, or damage to, those controlled dangerous substances.
- (d) All controlled dangerous substance training samples will be inspected, weighed and tested quarterly. The results of the quarterly testing shall be recorded and maintained by the canine coordinator with a copy forwarded to the dispensing agency.
- (e) All controlled dangerous substance training samples will be stored in locked, airtight and watertight cases at all times, except during training. The locked cases shall be secured in the trunk of the canine handler's assigned patrol vehicle during transport and stored in an appropriate locked container. There are no exceptions to this procedure.
- (f) The Canine Supervisor shall periodically inspect every controlled dangerous substance training sample for damage or tampering and take any appropriate action.
- (g) Any unusable controlled dangerous substance training samples shall be returned to the Property Unit or to the dispensing agency.
- (h) All controlled dangerous substance training samples shall be returned to the dispensing agency upon the conclusion of the training or upon demand by the dispensing agency.

309.12.7 EXPLOSIVE TRAINING AIDS

Deputies may possess, transport, store, or use explosives or destructive devices in compliance with state and federal laws (18 USC § 842; 27 CFR 555.41).

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Explosive training aids designed specifically for canine teams should be used whenever feasible. Due to the safety concerns in the handling and transportation of explosives, inert or non-hazardous training aids should be employed whenever feasible. The use of explosives or destructive devices for training aids by canine teams is subject to the following:

- (a) All explosive training aids, when not in use, shall be properly stored in a secure facility appropriate for the type of materials.
- (b) An inventory ledger shall be maintained to document the type and quantity of explosive training aids that are stored.
- (c) The Canine Supervisor shall be responsible for verifying the explosive training aids on hand against the inventory ledger once each quarter.
- (d) Only members of the canine team shall have access to the explosive training aids storage facility.
- (e) A primary and secondary custodian will be designated to minimize the possibility of loss of explosive training aids during and after the training. Generally, the handler will be designated as the primary custodian while the trainer or authorized second person on-scene will be designated as the secondary custodian.
- (f) Any lost or damaged explosive training aids shall be promptly reported to the Canine Supervisor, who will determine if any further action will be necessary. Any loss of explosives will be reported to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

309.13 LICENSING

Canines and their handlers shall be licensed with the Maryland State Police prior to being used for law enforcement operations. The handler ID card should be carried by the handler whenever the canine is performing any law enforcement-related function. The canine ID tag shall be in handler's possession at all times and available upon request. Any change in a canine's handler requires notification to the Maryland State Police (Md. Code PS § 2-313).

Missing ID cards and ID tags shall be replaced as soon as practicable.