



**FEMA**

**DATE:** November 30, 2005

**MEMORANDUM**

**FOR: Search Working Group  
Chair**

**DATE: Nov 30-05**

**FROM: Canine Subcommittee**

**SUBJECT: Minutes: Canine Coordinator Telecon Facilitated by the Canine Subcommittee**

Please find the attendance and items addressed at the recent Canine Coordinator conference call:

<b>DATE</b> November 30, 2005	Call #1
<b>Subcommittee Member</b>	<b>Nov 30</b>
Teresa MacPherson, Chair	Y
John Dean	Y
Mike Marks	Y
Cathy Schiltz	Y
Debra Tosch	Y
John Gilkey (absent)	Y

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**COORDINATOR ATTENDANCE**

<b>TF</b>	<b>Canine Coordinator</b>
<b>AZTF-1</b>	<b>John Dean</b>
<b>CATF-1</b>	<b>Ron Weckbacher</b>
<b>CATF-2</b>	<b>Bill Monahan (attempted)</b>
<b>CATF-3</b>	<b>Shirley Hammond</b>
<b>CATF-4</b>	<b>Darren Bobrosky</b>
<b>CATF-5</b>	<b>Terry Scottt</b>
<b>CATF-6</b>	<b>Dave Lesh (absent)</b>
<b>CATF-7</b>	<b>Randy Gross (absent—out of town)</b>
<b>CATF-8</b>	<b>Steve Swaney (absent)</b>
<b>COTF-1</b>	<b>Ann Wichmann</b>
<b>FLTF-1</b>	<b>Mike Marks</b>
<b>FLTF-2</b>	<b>Craig Radelman</b>
<b>INTF-1</b>	<b>Anne McCurdy</b>
<b>MATF-1</b>	<b>Lee Prentiss</b>
<b>MDTF-1</b>	<b>John Gilkey (absent)</b>
<b>MOTF-1</b>	<b>Schiltz, Cathy</b>
<b>NETF-1</b>	<b>Dan Wright</b>
<b>NMTF-1</b>	<b>Bruce Berry</b>
<b>NVTF-1</b>	<b>Mike Szoke, Mark Kittleton, Jay Carlson, Tom Moore</b>
<b>NYTF-1</b>	<b>Joe Caputo (attempted)</b>
<b>OHTF-1</b>	<b>Athena Robbins</b>

**COORDINATOR ATTENDANCE**

<b>TF</b>	<b>Canine Coordinator</b>
<b>PATF-1</b>	<b>Jeff Snyder</b>
<b>TNTF-1</b>	<b>Deborah Burnett</b>
<b>TXTF-1</b>	<b>Susann Brown</b>
<b>UTTF-1</b>	<b>Jim Winder</b>
<b>VATF-1</b>	<b>Heritage, Sonja</b>
<b>VATF-2</b>	<b>Jim Ingledue</b>
<b>WATF-2</b>	<b>Tony Sirgedas</b>

Agenda:

**Roll Call**

- 1) Discuss Roles & Responsibilities**
- 2) Discuss Policies & Procedures**
- 3) Discuss Budgets**
- 4) Update of 2006 Evaluation Process/Roundtable/Set date for next call**

**1) Discussion of Roles and Responsibilities:**

Teresa explained that the goal of this call is not to standardize the Task Force Canine program, but to facilitate networking and information-sharing among all of the TF Canine Coordinators.

It was explained how the position evolved (even though it is not an official position on the TF org chart) John Dean explained that the successful task forces all have hand's-on canine coordinators that have similar roles and responsibilities as previously set forth in the agenda.

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### **2) Discussion of Policies and Procedures (report by each TF canine coordinator):**

- AZ-TF1 has a six month trial period to ensure handlers are aware of the level of commitment. They are helpers, victims, etc. and if they stick with it for six months, they get a dog. Dogs belong to training group and then are assigned to the handler so if handler leaves, the dog stays. Removal process-none, they have not had that issue come up.
- CA-TF3 has a process to screen dogs. It is a modification of the Brownell/Marsolais process. They interview once a year for prospective handlers.
- UT-TF1-has a policy/procedure manual. It defines the process for handlers. One criterion is passing a criminal background check. A discipline/grievance procedure is also included. It explains disqualifying behavior. Jim will send to Teresa to disseminate. Pursuant to this new procedure, they have instituted a re- application process. Each handler endorses that they have read, understand and will abide by the policies. They do not have a probation period. Their canine program leans heavily towards public safety service (fire and police). They are covered by workmans comp. They do allow civilians. Liability and insurance is a big reason for this for leaning towards public safety service. .
- FL-TF1 has a policy/procedure manual that is available. The team needs to certify within a certain period of time. Their canine program is open to TF members first.
- CO-TF1 implements application screening, background checks and progress charts. They have an insurance policy to cover all TF members for training.
- FL-TF2 does not have a formal recruitment process. They utilize the Foundation and word of mouth from current handlers. They screen handlers by advising them of the FEMA requirements, family issues and also requires the candidate to talk to a minimum of 3 handlers. They then have the candidate attend 6 training sessions to be exposed to the reality of the training. They have handlers that also belong to a state TF. It is a touchy subject and tough situation. They have come close to not having enough dogs for deployment. Three are attached to Tampa and the state once refused to release the handlers. Since then they have certified more handlers and now have more depth. They lost four handlers in a short period of time. They now require the state TF to sign a first right of refusal.
- IN-TF1: They took no new handlers in 2005 because their roster is full. Handlers are required to pass a Type II pre-test to get on the team. All dogs are owner bought and trained. They have two firefighters. They are turning teams away. Handlers need to live within 3 hours of Indianapolis. They have a one year probation period. Minimum training is 20 times their first year. Equip issued is 3 uniforms, boots and helmets. Once certified, handlers receive their red bag, yellow bag, etc.
- MA-TF1 began Task Force trainings one year ago. All dogs are handler owned. The TF reps interview the handlers. Prior to the interview, the applicant must pass a TF physical. The probation period is 12 months. Dog is screened. They train once a month as a group. They have never terminated anyone.

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- VA-TF1-Sonja will send VA-TF1's liability waiver. Recruitment has not been a problem. Applicant must have 5 years as a professional handler to apply. Handlers are screened through an interview process. They have a 50% attendance requirement. Trying to get handlers cross-trained. Coordinator must be advised of all travel by certified teams in order to keep home base covered for deployments.
- NM-TF1-Recruitment is primarily word of mouth. They have wilderness teams to draw from in addition to word of mouth. They have a six month probationary period for all members. Four times a year they conduct canine assessments. If dog does not pass it is released. Attendance requirement is monthly TF trainings and canine training follows on the next day. Their window of time for arrival is up to 4-5 hours. This is becoming a problem. They have a local air carrier for some transport. They are working with civil air patrol to try to work something out. Liability: the state is the sponsoring agency and they fall underneath their liability plan. Handlers are covered as long as they fall underneath their liability plan. Handlers are covered as long as the training is scheduled. Some sites require a liability release.
- MO-TF1 has a recruitment problem. They have a 3 hour window requirement. They screen dog and handler. In January they will implement a physical fitness requirement. Cathy will send their physical fitness requirements.
- NV-TF1 has delegated K9 to the Las Vegas police department. The TF purchased the dogs for the PD handlers. Dogs belong to the TF but are assigned to police officers.
- OH-TF1 is not made up of one entity. It is made up of 30-40. They have handlers not in fire/police. Their probation period is 6-12 months after first screening the canine/handler. Required to come out and train to be evaluated. Has an SOP.
- PA-TF1-conducts an annual open house. They get new members from word of mouth. They are invited to the open house. Selected certified handlers evaluate the prospective teams. Passing a Level II (in-house) allows them to become a member. They fund everything themselves. Training site is on college grounds so they sign a waiver.
- A couple of Task Forces cap the number of teams at 12. Indiana caps at 18. FEMA only rosters 12 teams per TF as far as coverage.
- TN-TF1 owns 90 percent of their dogs. For recruitment they take a nice, well-behaved dog to TF meetings and asks if anyone wants to cross over. They also have police officers. The canine coordinator keeps a spreadsheet for deployment rotation. There are three trainings a week so handlers can at least get one a week in. They put in up to 24 hours a week training together. Some handlers are cross trained in other disciplines on the TF. They deploy Type I teams first. They then fill empty slots with Type IIs. In the field they pair up a Type I and a Type II.
- TX-TF1 leadership dictates that the canine program be conducted as all other TF programs. They open trainings up to anyone in the state. They then recruit from them. Annually they have a TF wide open application. They purchase the dogs for the handlers. Teams are not deployable unless certified. They have a limited time to complete training. Must be within a 4 hour drive. They train monthly at College Station and have quarterly regional training.

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- VA-TF2 does have problems with handlers and releasing them. They are interested the other TF policies. They have an ad-hoc interview process. They do not do advertising or recruiting. They rely on handlers to bring in other people. Insurance is a problem.
- WA-TF1 uses a local dog group to do their screening. Canines are on a quarterly rotation for deployment. They use the county's policy for discipline issues. They have an even mix of civilian/firefighter handlers. They are seeing a slow shift in the direction of public safety. It is easier for people on the team because they know who they are dealing with. The firefighters understand the chain of command.

### 3) Budgets:

Tabled for the next call

### 4) Update on 2006 Evaluation Process/Roundtable:

FSA--think of it as the current pre-test, but using any two rostered evaluators. It will not be conducted on the same day as the certification evaluation. It is suggested that the FSA is effective for six months. The FSA may be administered at home or away in accordance with the policy of the individual Task Force.

There is no minimum age requirement for the FSA, but Dog must be at least 18 months to test for certification.

FSA can be conducted anytime. If host needs to bring in an evaluator, it is not mandated by FEMA that you pay them.

Evaluator process—a candidate may shadow the FSA and the Certification evaluation separately. The two are now mutually exclusive, but it's desirable to be qualified to do both.

Certification Prep weekends can be used as shadow experiences when the mock tests are conducted.

FSA dogs are not certified.

The Position Description for the Canine Search Specialist includes current certification—they (along with all of the other TF Position Descriptions) are still in the review period, which was prolonged due to the deployments.

Little Giant is the ladder to be used for the FSA as the required ladder obstacle.

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Questions and Answers

- Question: How long should it take to get a team certified?
  - VA1 says it should be certified (advanced) by 3 years old, considering the short working life span of the dog.
- Question: What do Task Forces do in regards to issuing equipment?
  - CO issues basic safety equipment early and deployment equipment after team is certified.

**Other: Breed specific legislature:**

Legal Issues Work Group says don't take it for granted that Federal will override State. Banned breeds may not be permitted into certain states for training, testing and/or deployment.

**Next Call: December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2005  
1400 EST**