

MEMORANDUM

U.S. Department of Homeland Security



FEMA

DATE: Dec 28, 2005

MEMORANDUM

FOR: Search Working Group
Chair

CALL DATES 12-8-05
12-14-05

FROM: Canine Subcommittee

SUBJECT: Canine Subcommittee Evaluator Conference Call Minutes

Please find the attendance and items addressed at the two recent Canine Subcommittee evaluators conference call:

CALL DATE(s) >> Dec 8 and 14, 2005		
Member	Dec 8th	Dec 14th
Teresa MacPherson, Chair (Moderator)	Y	Y
John Dean	Y	Y
John Gilkey	Y	Y
Mike Marks	Y	Y
Cathy Schiltz	Y	Y
Debra Tosch	Y	Y

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EVALUATOR ATTENDANCE

December 8th	Y/N	December 14th	Y/N
Lynne Engelbert	Y	Julie Noyes	Y
Susann Brown	Y	Bob Sessions	Y
Rose DeLuca	Y	Bob Deeds	Y
Ron Sanders	Y	Pat Kayranoglu	Y
Garrett Dyer	Y	Sam Balsam	Y
Jen Massey	Y	Jeaneen McKinney	Y
Randy Gross	Y	Teresa Ortenburger	Y
Carla Collins	Y	Nancy Hachmeister	Y
Mike Agnew	Y	Susan Martinez	Y
Elizabeth Kreitler	Y	Cyndie Fajardo	Y
Bob McCauley	Y	Ann Wichmann	Y
Amy Rising	Y	Lisa Berry	Y
Mark Dawson	Y	Linda Neimeier	Y
Anne McCurdy	Y	Mary Flood	Y
Rob Cima	Y	Gail McCarthy	Y
Kathy Jo Carlisle	Y	Hilda Wood	Y
Lee Turner	Y	Sharon Gattas	Y
Sally Timms	Y	Rox Dunn	Y
Elaine Sawtell	Y	Bud Souza	Y
Athena Robbins	Y	Monica Barger	Y
Sonya Heritage	Y	Darren Bobrosky	Y

EVALUATOR ATTENDANCE

ABSENT		December 14th, continued	Y/N
Bruce Berry		Lee Dunn	Y
Reeny Shannon		Ron Weckbacher	Y
Rory Rehbeck		Lee Prentiss	Y
Gary Hay		Pat Grant	Y
Deborah Burnett		Rich Grant	Y
Rex Ianson		Sharon Grant	Y
Deresa Teller		Janet Merrill	Y
Shirley Hammond		Lette Birn	Y
Tom Haus		Tom Moore	Y
Steve Swaney		Shelia McKee	Y
Steve Dolezal		Julie Noyes	Y
Matt Claussen		Jackie McCarty	Y
Ed Apple		LaFond Davis	Y
Tony Sirgedas		Karen Meadows	Y

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Teresa MacPherson: Program Update

Evaluation process 2006

- FSA=Foundation Skills Assessment –this is the old “pretest” with the exception that any two rostered evaluators must be used.
- CE=Certification Evaluation (this will be the only “test”)
- CP=Certification Preparation (the same resources will be on site as used for the CE, but specifically designed for training for certification —need to have passed an FSA or team may use the CP as an FSA to attend)

Budget/Test Schedule

- The number of tests was cut due to a 10 mil budget cut. In 2006 there will be six tests and 3 CPs, which can be converted to tests. The hosting task forces were funded with the same amount as last year for doing both T-1 and T-2 tests so they should be able to host 2 to 3 days of T-1 testing, if the numbers warrant

K9 team Roster Stats

- T-1's--122
- T-2's --88 (quality is getting stronger and they are moving on to pass the Type I)
- Pass rate of 66% for 2005.
- Evaluators--between 80-90, including those in progress
 - There will be a moratorium on Shadow Evaluator apps beginning 1-1-06

Evaluators

- FSA
 - Any two rostered evaluators
 - May be 2 rostered STMs
 - May be from the hosting TF
- CE/CP
 - Nine rostered evaluators plus a Chief
 - Chief is not attached to a pile. He/She is an overseer
 - Chief may act as a Shadow Mentor
- Requirements to remain current
 - FSA
 - Must evaluate at least one FSA every two years
 - Attendance at evaluator telecons
 - One unexcused absence, evaluator is dropped into the alternate pool
 - Two unexcused absences, evaluator must repeat the shadow process
 - CE/CP
 - Must evaluate at least one CE or CP every two years
 - Attendance at evaluator telecons
 - One unexcused absence, evaluator is dropped into the alternate pool
 - Two unexcused absences, evaluator must repeat the shadow process
 - Semi-annual review and approval of roster by Program Managers at TFL meetings
 - Evaluator telecons will occur every June and December
 - The info will be posted on the websites and evaluators can also contact their regional Reps

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In progress

- The CSC is discussing Evaluator workshops in the form of on-line video training
 - Discussion as to whether to use actual test examples or set up scenarios
- Working with Accountability Work Group to track problems using test stats
 - To include pass/fail, what was failed, date/location, evaluators, TF affiliation

Test Applications

- Hosting Task Force should try to get the announcement out at least 3 months ahead of time.
- Slots should not be “saved”
 - Applications should be accepted on a first-come-first-serve basis

Disasterhelp.gov

- Teresa will soon be able to facilitate the addition of system members. Details to follow.

Cathy Schlitz:

- **FSA—Agility**
 - Stop and turn may be completed on any obstacle. It doesn't have to be on the first attempt. It doesn't have to be on the same obstacle. May be completed on a failed obstacle. Stop and/or turn not allowed in the tunnel.
 - Ladder will be the Little Giant as in cache—RF-0131.00
 - Wobbly is now defined—see DSCREP [four 3' high sawhorses topped by a 4' by 8' sheet of plywood. Up to two feet of debris to make the surface “wobbly” is placed on top]
- **FSA—Long Down**
 - Address beforehand that *hand signals* may be used as the handlers return to their dogs, followed by a soft release when directed by the evaluators.
 - A verbal cue will not necessarily fail a team— the idea is not to be disruptive to the other dogs in the exercise.
- **FSA—Rewarding in between elements**
 - The test set up will somewhat dictate where and when the handler can reward (play) with dog.
 - Every effort should be made to include a break area at a point(s) in between elements to relieve the dogs and/or play with them.
- **FSA—Bark Alert**
 - A toy reward is permitted at the completion of this exercise beginning 1-1-06

John Gilkey:

- **Certification Evaluation—Briefings**
 - Address beforehand that the AAR will be specific in details
 - The misconduct of any and all participants involved will be noted and named
 - There is now a section for the hosting IC to complete
 - The FEMA US&R Code of Conduct must be followed
- **Breed-specific legislation**
 - Breed specific legislations are being developed throughout the U.S.
 - Be aware that a banned breed may be refused admittance into a jurisdiction for testing, training or deployment where the breed is banned.
 - This topic was put to Legal Issues and they can not guarantee that federal will overrule state.
 - Disaster Dog will post websites that lists the states with legislation.

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John Dean:

- **Evaluator Demeanor**

When you review the after action reports that are submitted after each test, the comments on evaluator demeanor are overwhelmingly positive. Occasionally however, the Canine Subcommittee receives questions or concerns about an evaluator's demeanor. Many times the evaluator is trying to offer helpful ideas and relay specifics about a dog's performance on their pile. A majority of these comments are extremely helpful and appreciated by the handler. On some rare occasions evaluator comments are taken the wrong way and add to the stress and disappointment of the testing team.

It is no secret that all of us as handlers react differently to stress. We do not want to limit the sharing of information, nor our ability to mentor during a test. But, it is helpful to remember that a readiness evaluation is a test and not training. For this reason, it is our suggestion that evaluator comments be held until the debrief and then, only offered if requested by the handler. The Chief Evaluator can go over this idea during the safety meeting so everyone is reminded that the evaluators will be available at the debrief.

Each test is unique and seems to develop a pace of its own. The bottom line is that we need to remember that as an evaluator each testing team is a customer. A smile and a pleasant demeanor can go a long way, even if the handler is having a bad day. If you have a team that did not certify, you might plan for an exchange of information at the debriefing and offer any requested comments in an exchange between the handler, the evaluator, and the Chief evaluator.

Mike Marks:

- **Shadow SOPs**

- Shadows should rotate on the piles (they need to experience all sites, but one/two at a time. They should not be allowed to disrupt the test)
- They should be briefed and debriefed by the Shadow Mentor
- The Mentor should review the shadow's comments and discuss them with the Shadow
- The Mentor should use the training guide once per shadow
 - Administer as an open-book test
 - Mentor provides Chief with written report for AAR

Debra Tosch:

- **Misc. Q & A's**

- **Q: Will the Premier Collar being sold on disasterdog.org be allowed at FEMA canine evaluations?**
- **A:** No—It is considered a training collar since it can be used to give a correction

- **Q: When will certificates be issued?**
- **A:** All past due certificates thru June 05 have been issued. They were hand-delivered to the TFLs at the August meeting In NV. Any requests for missing (or corrected) certificates need to go through the Task Force chain of command. Dean will be giving all certificates through December in January.

- **Q: Will Type I's need to pass an FSA to test and re-cert?**
- **A:** Yes, beginning 1-1-06, the FSA will be the qualifying pre-test for certification. It's only once every three years and it will help maintain the foundation skills. Due to manpower and site shortages, a Type I pretest is still not required, but certainly encouraged. An FSA is suggested to be good for six months, but a Task Force can require one at any time.

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- **Q: Does the FSA score sheet need to accompany the application for certification?**
- **A:** No, just check the box on the app, as we do now for a pretest.

- **Q: After 1-1-06, if you fail a re-cert, will you lose your certification?**
- **A:** Yes, until you pass your re-cert. If you are a current Type II and test for ‘Type I’ and fail, you retain your Type II certification. If you test early for a Type I recert and you fail you lose your certification.

- **Q: If I take a Type II before the end of the year and fail, do I lose my Type I status (which is still good for a year)? And if I pass the Type II, am I dually certified—keeping my Type II for a year if I fail my Type I re-cert?**
- **A:** Whenever you test, you are determining your status at that time—if you test early and fail, you lose your certification. If you take a Type II and fail, you lose everything and would have to start over. It’s not justifiable to retain an advanced status if the first step to that point can’t be passed.

- **Questions 12-8-05**
 - **Q: There is no application for the Cert Preps. How do handlers apply to participate?**
 - **A:** The CSC will create a form. In the interim, use the Type I and Type II applications.

 - **Q: Is there a way for all of the evaluator’s TFs to get feedback on how their evaluators performed?**
 - **A:** The CSC will address this at the face-to-face in January as to distributing the AAR to all Program Managers.

 - **Q: If a team is certified Type II, do they need to take the FSA, before attempting the CE?**
 - **A:** Yes, if the certification is older than six months.

 - **Q: During the emergency stop, if the dog shows a change in gait, can it stop at the handler’s feet?**
 - **A:** The dog is judged on the quickness of its response. The dog should show an immediate change in gait, followed by a slowed pace and the stop. The only reason a dog should down at a handler’s feet, is if the evaluator gave the command too late.
 - **CSC:** Remember **the** spirit of the exercise is to keep the dog safe in real life situations.

 - **Q: Is the bark barrel the only element that a toy can be in their pack/pocket?**
 - **A:** Yes.

 - **Q: Is there a list of rostered evaluators posted anywhere?**
 - **A:** Yes, on DisaserHelp.gov. It cannot be posted on an open site for security purposes since personal information is listed on the roster.

 - **Q: Are FSA dogs considered deployable? Is it up to the TF?**
 - **A:** The Canine Search Specialist Position Description was in the 3 week review process in August, when it was delayed due to the hurricanes. Upon approval, current certification is a requirement for the position. Until then, it is up to the TF.

 - **Q: Are you considered certified if you are certified Type II?**
 - **A:** Yes-but only those that are certified Type II by December 2005. The FSA is not a certification.

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- **Q: On the Type I evaluation form under the Alert section, “handler identifies and marks location” What if the alert is too far away or is a false alert? Is this a DNC?**
- **A:** This is judging a handler skill only—if he/she marks and identifies an “alert”, then that is not a DNC for that skill, whether the alert is valid or not (separate issue).

- **Q: For certified Type I teams, if they fail the in-house FSA do they lose their certification?**
- **A:** No, but they do have to pass one before they can re-certify.

- **Q: For the CPs that are offering an FSA at the event, does the Program Manager need to give permission to take? Will the FSA be at the beginning or end of the CP? If a certification test is also being given, will it be prior to the CP?**
- **A:** The Program Managers must sign the applications for CP attendance, which will include FSAs and CEs apps. Any FSAs and CEs will be conducted prior to the CP.

- **Q: When do evaluators see the evaluator groups list?**
- **A:** It will be distributed to the Program Managers in the form of a directive. Anyone who would like to see it in the meantime, please contact your Rep.

- **Q: For the FSA wobbly, will it be 5’ in height? Will the dog have to make a 5’ leap?**
- **A:** The plywood is at 3’ and it is a maximum of 2 feet of debris. The dog should not have to jump more than 3 feet however to access the obstacle.
- **CSC** will clarify in DSCREP.

- **Q: Who sends out the AAR to the TFL?**
- **A:** The Canine Subcommittee distributes the AAR to the Program Managers.

- **Q: Can a dog take a Type I test at 18 months of age? If so, can it take the FSA younger than 18 months?**
- **A:** The dog must be at least 18 months to take the Type I. Yes, it can be younger than 18 months to take the FSA.

- **Q: If a mixed breed is mixed with one of the banned breeds, is there a challenge in identifying if it is a banned breed?**
- **A:** Yes, it’s a challenge and the laws may vary from state to state. The CSC just wanted to make the Task Forces aware of the issue.

- **Q: Can the subcommittee compile a list of the areas that have banned breed legislatures?**
- **A:** On the Canine Coordinator call someone did volunteer to compile such a list and it is posted on disasterdog.org.

- **Q: The last test (Dec) was very organized but viewers did not have access to the site. Is it not possible for new handlers to have access to the sites so that they can learn?**
- **A:** It is up to the hosting TF to coordinate. It is site specific and up to the Chief Evaluator.

- **Q: In the past some of the hotels for lodging for evaluators have been less than clean. When the TF selects the site is there a guideline for hotel expectations?**
- **A:** No, but the hotels are evaluated in the peer review.

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- **Comment:** This is in regards to securing evaluators in a timely manner: When down to the last few days before the tests, there should be no need to wait 48 hours for the evaluator's answer.
- **CSC:** That is why we went to the evaluator groups. This should not be a problem in the future because the TF can contact the evaluators on their list in advance.

- **Comment:** What about a video for prepping for an FSA and a Type I? Could we get one made?
- **CSC:** Good idea. We will discuss at the face to face.

- **Comment:** If using a video for evaluator training, consider using videos from actual tests.

- **Comment:** The type II handlers aren't going to be motivated to take the Type I early if they lose their certification if they fail.
- **CSC:** If a Type II teams attempts Type I prior to their certification expiring and they fail, they still maintain their Type II status.

- **Comment:** If there is an issue at a test, bring it up immediately with the Chief Evaluator

- **Comment:** Consider putting in the test announcement that no preference is given to the hosting TF.

- **Q: Is priority given to re-certs?**
- **A:** It is not mandated that priority be given to handlers that are re-certifying.

- **Questions 12-14-05**
 - **Q: How often is the DSCREP re-written?**
 - **A:** Whatever comes up in any given month is addressed at the monthly CSC conference call. Changes to the DSCREP or Policies are added to the cover sheet posted on DisasterDog.org. The DSCREP is re-written every January.

 - **Q: When will we know about the evaluator groups?**
 - **A:** The roster will be distributed to the Program Managers in the form of a directive. Anyone who would like to see it in the meantime, please contact your Rep.

 - **Q: Although we still need applications signed for the Type I, if your TF isn't giving an FSA but you know another TF is putting one on, can you take theirs?**
 - **A:** Where a team takes an FSA is up to that team's TF and the hosting TF.

 - **Q: Is the CP in conjunction with the test?**
 - **A:** Any CP can have a test added on in front or may be converted into a test.

 - **Q: On the Type II vs. Type I, is there an option? Can you opt out of the FSA and do a Type I pretest?**
 - **A:** Not at this point.

 - **Q: If you are scheduled to re-cert March 20 do you have the month to certify? Does your certification run out and are you still deployable?**
 - **A:** A team must re-cert at the first test opportunity. If there isn't a test that month you have until the next testing month. If you must go past your due date, notify your Rep ahead of time.

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- **Q: Is it your intention to eliminate the FSA requirement to take the Type I?**
- **A:** Not at this time.

- **Q Since it's called a Fundamental Skills Assessment, does it need a 100% pass to take the Type I?**
- **A:** The FSA should be administered as written, with the intent of assessing the team's potential to certify.

- **Q: Do Type I dogs recertifying need to arrange time to take the FSA and the Type I certification?**
- **A:** Yes.

- **Q: What if the ladder in the cache is not labeled as a Little Giant?**
- **A:** If it has the correct part number and is essentially the same ladder, it does not need to be labeled the Little Giant.
- **CSC** will look into rewording for the DSCREP.

- **Q If a handler took an in-house pre-test a couple of months prior to 06 without two rostered evaluators, can they still take the Type I?**
- **A:** No, they still need to take the FSA

- **Q: In the DSCREP it says the search site can be a partially collapse structure. Can it be a full building?**
- **A:** No, it cannot be a standing building.

- **Q: If a handler takes a Type II test and passes the elements but fails the rubble, do they need to take the FSA?**
- **A:** The FSA may be segmented as the Type II was. If the team's TF accepts a segmented FSA, the team may take the rubble –only of the FSA. They still need to complete the rubble part within the 6 month window. And the hosting TF must agree to conducting a rubble-only test.

- **Q: If you have a Type II dog, do you need to take the FSA if the certification is older than 6 months?**
- **A:** Yes.
 - **Comment: So the dog is deployable, but can't take a test?**
 - **CSC:** The TF determines deployability. The team is a certified Type II level team that must complete an FSA before attempting a Certification test. This interim situation will exist until 1-1-08, when all type II teams will expire.