



DOG TALK

The official *unofficial* newsletter for FEMA dog handlers

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Paso Robles Earthquake

At approx. 11:25 am on Monday, December 22, 2003 a 6.5 earthquake centered near Cambria in central California caused severe damage to the nearby city of Paso Robles. Several buildings sustained structural damage including one in the downtown area that suffered a complete roof collapse. This structure included several businesses; a jewelry store, a bakery, a dress shop and a novelty store. Built in the 1890's, it was a two story, un-reinforced masonry structure. Dozens of aftershocks were felt in the following hours, some ranging above a 4.0 on the Richter scale.

I was working my normal shift as a Truck Engineer in Goleta, approx. 2 hours south of Paso Robles. The earthquake was easily felt in our district. We were just finishing up a cliff-side rope rescue drill when we felt the quake. Our dispatch center ordered all apparatus out of their stations and we began to survey our district. For the next two hours we responded non-stop to downed power lines, gas leaks and fire alarm calls. We returned to our station around 13:00. We began to watch reports on the national news of the damage sustained in Paso Robles. Knowing I was the closest Disaster Search K9 to the incident I assumed a call would come at some point. At approx. 16:30 I received a call from OES requesting I deploy with my K9 partner Duke to Paso Robles. I was advised the request was being processed and my department would soon be notified. Moments later, I received a call from my Battalion Chief advising me that the request had been received and to respond directly to the collapse we had been watching on the news.

When I arrived at 18:40, I met with personnel from our department who had been sent as part of a strike team to provide additional personnel to assist at the scene. I also met with Ventura County Fire Department's US&R Heavy Rescue who had arrived about an hour earlier and began assuming command of the search and rescue operations. I was told they had a search assignment waiting for us as soon as we were ready. Within minutes Duke and I were searching what was originally the bakery. Its roof had been torn off, the second story collapsed onto the first and a pile of bricks and sticks remained with several voids. VNC had already searched the area with search cameras and had found nothing. Results of their search and initial reports led them to believe there were no victims still inside. So our search was more of a confirmation for them. Duke moved quickly into a void accessed from the front of the building. As he came out, he then went up onto the pile of debris working the remainder of the occupancy. As he moved towards the back of the bakery, the wind at our backs, he began to show a great deal of interest in several voids. He began to give a strong alert, but was non-specific as to which void. He was indicating scent from several areas at the back of the bakery.

As the rescue team looked at me with some concern, since they had already searched this area, I asked them if anyone was working below us. They said they had a search team in the basement below us. I advised them it was possible he was picking up their scent and would like to have them back out when possible and resend Duke when they were out. Several visible voids could be seen from the pile we were on with drop offs of 8-10 feet in some places. VNC rescue personnel stated they had been in those voids and had good visibility and were confident there were no victims in those locations. They tried to get an attic ladder down into one void, but the angle and slant to the ladder made the access very difficult. Duke just looked at me as if to say "Are you kidding?" As he began to climb, the ladder kept shifting and we decided to move on and use our resources elsewhere.

Our next search was a novelty store, with access through a broken display window in the front. There were cracks in the ceiling, and contents of the occupancy strewn all over. Duke moved through rather easily with no indication of possible victims. Canned and open food containers provided a nice realistic distraction for him, which he ignored.

We moved onto a dress shop next. Our access was under the collapsed roof which had formed a lean-to void the length of the building. Moving through a raker shore towards the front door we began our next search. An interesting feature to this search was that, again, we had a search team working in the basement below the shop. This time, however, they had cut a triangular access hole in the floor to gain entry. To make things more interesting, one of the team members kept popping his head up through the hole to talk the other rescue team members in the shop with us. Duke approached them, gave them a puzzled look and moved on. Here was where a distinct advantage to our K9's really came into play. Inside the dress shop, a stairway led to the second story. However rescuer access was blocked at the top of the stairway due to the unsupported roof that had fallen down and into the stairway. It had not been searched yet! I was able to send Duke up the stairs to the second floor on his own. Once he reached the top, moving around the debris, he went to the right searching the second floor. About 10 seconds later he came back across the hallway moving to the left continuing to search. About 30 seconds later he returned to the stairway as if to say, "All done, what's next?" We exited the shop and awaited our next assignment.

We took a short break as rescue teams breached a door under the lean-to to access the back of the jewelry store. Again, this would be an area that had not yet been searched. We returned a few minutes later, began searching, soon realizing that the building had shifted during the last few minutes. As he completed his search, everyone was pulled out of the lean-to for further evaluation.

We were then asked to search some small debris piles, primarily bricks, under the lean-to. We were told they had not been searched yet. The piles were very small, unlikely to cover a body, but we searched them with no indications noted.

Our final search was a repeat of our first search, the bakery, where Duke had shown earlier interest. Search teams were able to pull out of the basement and their scent was allowed to settle for about 20 minutes. As I sent Duke in, I observed him going through all the same areas, casting and putting his nose into all the same voids he had searched earlier, this time with no alert or indication of new scent. I felt confident the scent he picked up on earlier was, in fact, the search team working in the basement.

That would be our last search. Rescue teams began to pack up for the night, planning to return in the morning to begin shoring operations. This would give them safer access to the building so they could remove the remaining valuables from the building for the shop owners.

We turned our efforts towards some good PR before our night would end. Talking to several reporters about our assignment, making sure to talk about the Search Dog Foundation and how the program works.

It was now 22:00 and time to get back on the road. A final physical check of Duke, a well deserved "late" dinner, and a short 2 hour drive back to my station to finish my shift.

Another great experience. It assured me that our training is ON TRACK. This is the true test and it all pays off when the bells go off.

By Howard Orr
CA-OES

Near Deployment to Iran

The last week of December was a busy time in the disaster search dog world. On December 22nd, a 6.5 earthquake hit in the San Simeon / Paso Robles area of California, with the major damage limited to a few blocks of downtown Paso Robles. Howard Orr and his dog Duke responded to and searched the damaged area.

In the early evening of Christmas Day, the Southern California area was hit by a large rainstorm that produced a mud and debris slide in Old Waterman Canyon and a campsite in the Devore area of San Bernardino. These two areas are in the same location that the Old Fire burned in the end of October this year. The flood in Old Waterman Canyon destroyed the church retreat where the caretaker was having family and friends over for Christmas, and carried the victims downstream.

On the morning of December 26th Sheila McKee and Guinness, Sharon Gattas and Daussen, and Dave Graves with Coby responded to the canyon along with the other San Bernardino County Sheriff's Search and Rescue teams. Later that morning, more Type I disaster dog teams were called due to the size of the search area and the difficulty of the debris. In all five Type I canine teams from our training group were called in to search.

At midnight on the 26th, I was called to accompany Los Angeles County Fire Department's USAR Task Force (CA TF2) as they were activated by the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) to deploy to Iran. This call was shocking due to the fact that the United States has had no diplomatic ties with Iran for so many years. As all of the members of CA TF2 started to show up and check in, it became evident that each person was honored to be part of the first in roads to diplomacy and excited to go and help the people of Iran.

The five canine teams taking part in the deployment came from three of California's Task Forces. Debra Tosch and Abby, Howard Orr with Duke from CA TF1, Carrie Henger and Doc, Dan Solis with Sandi from CA TF2 and myself with Val from CA TF5. We had to deploy with only five canine teams instead of the usual six teams that OFDA deploys. This was due to the lack of passports, medical problems, and personal obligations of other possible teams.

By the early morning, the task force had arrived at March Air Force Base in Riverside, California. The task force was supposed to have two C147 planes to transport the team, but upon our arrival we found only one C5 to transport the task force. For the next three hours, the task force worked at reconfiguring the cache and doing some bodywork to a truck to fit everything into the plane.

Once the cache was loaded, we had our safety briefing and working group meeting. We talked about the plans for our mission. The plan was to travel for about twenty hours with a stop in Spain, with a final landing in a neighboring country. Once in the area, we would drive into Bam, Iran. When we reached Bam we were going to break out the search group and work for the next 48 hours.

It was going to be important to get out and search the largest area possible and not be too tied up in any one area. To meet this objective, the search team managers, Rory Rehbeck and Larry Collins, were splitting up the teams into a hasty search team and a detail search team. The hasty teams would pinpoint areas of interest without doing the detail search. The other team would do the detail work, pinpointing all the missing people. **Page 3**

The canine handlers were getting excited about the possibility of finding people and representing the United States and the Task Force to Iran and the rest of the world in a positive way. Our pride and excitement for the canine search program grew even more when we started getting calls from the other canine teams that were working in Old Waterman Canyon and hearing that they were having a great experience. They were able to read their dog's body language and helped to locate six of the bodies that day.

Just as we were getting ready to board the plane, we were told that the state department had put us on hold, but we were not going home until at least the next day when the state department was going to have a final conference call. We were going to live out of our daypacks until we either got our stand down order or left for the deployment.

We de-mobilized the next night.

The worst thing about the (near) deployment was the fact that about four days after we demobilized, a 97-year-old woman was found alive in the rubble by a canine team. It was frustrating to know that LA County (CATF2) and Fairfax (VATF1) could have been in Iran working and rescuing the people that were still alive.

The last person found was thirteen days after the 6.6 earthquake. We should never give up hope.

Lessons Learned

A need to standardize pre-issued equipment and uniforms for all neighboring task forces.

Each task Force issues equipment and uniforms differently. Canines, Engineers and Doctors can deploy with other Task Forces, where this inconsistency can create a hardship or delay to the deployment. Some Task Forces pre-issue everything, while others pre-issue uniforms only and others pre-issue very little to maintain accountability of all materials.

Larger Day Packs, at least for the Canine Teams

There is not enough room in the standard Brush firefighting web gear daypack for the needed Canine equipment and the handler's gear.

Canine red bags stay with the dogs during travel.

The canine red bags being loaded in the cache can create problems. We used two of the three days of food we carry for the dogs in our daypacks while we still had 24 hours of travel and 48 hours of searching ahead of us, and before we would be able to get to the food in our red bags. On normal deployments it could be a day or two before we could get into the cache.

Answer. Keep the canine red bag with the dog and load it last with the crates.

Inventory tags for my red bags

I need to make laminated inventory lists for each of my bags so it is easier get to needed items, without tearing the two bags apart to find one item.

**Marc Valentine & Val
CA TF5**

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The National Certification List of FEMA Certified Disaster Canine Search Teams is provided by Lynne Engelbert. (Lynne's e-mail: lengelbert@mail.arc.nasa.gov) It's attached below as an EXCEL spreadsheet. **PLEASE notify Lynne of any changes in address, status, etc!!!**



NatK9Cert12-03V3.xls

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Iran or Spain? Just not the same...

Friday night—no, we won't go.... no way....there are all kinds of reasons why we won't go.....

Saturday 0230 AM—WAKE UP! WE'RE GOING TO IRAN!

Well, all RIGHT!

I was packed for January in DC, which apparently is pretty good for January in Iran, too. After all of the processing, we arrived at Dover AFB about noon. We were to be airborne at noon, but that's ok, we are pumped. We were briefed for the special nature of this mission and were wheels up in a C5 at 1700.....for about an hour... then.....smoke in the cabin.....

We returned to Dover AFB. When we landed, firemen rushed onto our plane, which was, of course, full of firemen! We laughed. Then we deplaned and saw an adjacent aircraft off-loading dead soldiers from Iraq.

At midnight, we were wheels up again, but were fully aware that our window was closing. The dogs handled the 9-hour flight to Spain, but the Shepherds were indignant when we were asked to muzzle the dogs before we got off. (My lab didn't care—probably because I had to borrow a Shepherd muzzle and it was so big on her, she didn't even feel it).

Twelve hours later we were stood down. The dogs again handled the 9-hour return flight. They were frustrated that they didn't get to work; we were frustrated that we didn't get to work. But then we'd remember the dead soldiers.

Teresa MacPherson

VATF-1

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Deployment to the Waterman Mud Flow incident.

On Friday December 26th Mocha and I were having new front brakes installed on my van when an OES representative called my cell phone and asked if Mocha and I were available for an immediate need dispatch to the mudslides in San Bernardino. Because he had an OES incident number, I said I would be there in about 1.5 hours. I called my duty Battalion Chief to get clearance to go. I also called the Task Force 6 leader and left a message that one of their resources had been sent to the mudslide area. My equipment was in the van ready to go. As soon as my tires were back on my van, I headed to the command post in San Bernardino.

The command post was located at 40th Street and Waterman in the City of San Bernardino. Following a check-in briefing, I was sent to the Devore site. There I met Carrie Hanger and Doc, an L.A. County search dog team. The Devore site was a KOA campground located at the bottom of a canyon. A dozer had cleared a good path to the site. The weather was clear about 60°f with a gentle down-canyon wind. My search team manager was David Graves an experienced dog handler from Redlands Fire Dept. Some San Bernardino Sheriff's Search and Rescue dog handlers were with us for safety. A camp crew was available if needed. The buildings & trailers at the site had been searched and building markings were evident. My search objectives were to perform secondary searches of the buildings and debris piles for victims. No map was available of the site. The threat of new mudslides had past.

I initially searched an area located in the middle of the site area where a KOA office/store, restrooms, laundry facility, cabins and stables were located. The septic system was exposed and mud posed several hazards of exposure and entrapment. Mocha came upon a dead horse that had been dragged by a truck for about 50 feet post mortem. A pool of blood, presumably from the horse, was evident. Mocha initially checked out the horse and bit/pulled the horse's lip. I instructed her to "leave-it". She moved about 20' over and checked out an adjacent debris pile and reacted by quickly backing out with her hackles up. I pulled her back, watered her, reassured her, and resent her from another direction. She showed little new interest in the site. Another dog "Colby" a certified live find dog with cadaver scent experience was sent back to this location. Colby also showed interest but did not alert. A hand crew came in and moved debris. A TV and blanket were found but if a victim was there it was buried deeper than could be uncovered without heavy equipment. The mud was so dense that it sealed much of the scent. The temperature was so low that decomposition was minimal, hampering the cadaver scent dogs' efforts.

The second search for us was of the caretaker's house and surrounding trailers. The house was at the top of the canyon next to the major path of the mudflow. The house had about 2 feet of mud through out. Mocha found nothing of interest in the house. Searching the RV sites proved to be an interesting challenge. Mud and debris had moved many of the trailers into debris piles and broke open many of them. This required checking under, and next to, each trailer and car. Initially, I approached searching the site as an "area search" letting Mocha range out away from me. As she worked she became disoriented. The visual obstructions of the trailers, along with my being down wind, didn't work well. I could not keep track of her in the mud and obstacles. I altered Mocha's searches to be more controlled and detailed. I kept her off leash, but was reminded of the trailer searches I trained on at Iron Dog focusing her attention to a specific spot. We found nothing of interest. At the end of victim searching a motivational search was done to keep the dogs alert and interested, keeping the game fun. The team traveled to the closest fire station to decontaminate the dogs before returning to the command post where we were debriefed and requested to return the next operational period starting at 06:00 hours.

On Saturday December 27th Mocha and I left home at 04:00 for a 06:00 deployment in San Bernardino. After check-in and briefing, Russell Toa, Montebello Fire Dept. dog handler, and I were assigned to Site "A" (Camp Saint Sophia). The sky was clear and the temperature was about approximately 45°f with a slight down-canyon wind. I parked on a road below the campsite. This site had been searched the previous day and I was told stories about the tragedy of the flood and subsequent rescues on Christmas Day.

We decided to search the canyon on the right and left side by going up canyon with the running water separating the site. Both sides had the benefit of the down-canyon wind. I sent Mocha crosswind along a hillside bank; the debris that came over the hill below the church had hung up on trees before crossing the road and continuing down stream. She showed interest around the base of a tree but did not alert.

I continued for about 300 feet along the road and the hillside 150 feet past the mudflow. I then turned around and came back and checked along the road. I entered a box culvert along the road below the same tree where Mocha had initially showed interest. I was flat on my stomach sticking my hand in the culvert where Mocha was trying to get out of. She was indicating that something was in there but that they don't have her toy and she wanted out - NOW. In retrospect this tree had a lot of scent coming from it. It wasn't live human scent but rather a lot of pooled body scent. It took some time for her to figure it out. Mocha and I continued up the canyon where various damaged buildings and debris piles were searched. Mocha was very thorough in her search and the piles required good agility. Mocha and I switched sides with Russell and his dog Harry. The direction of search was now down-canyon and the wind direction was as helpful. The dogs finished searching and went into the crates for a rest. This was a large complicated search site.

The next search was on the other side of the road going down-stream with the wind to our back. Russell and Harry went first. The site was steep and the trees were entangled with rocks, clothing, and other debris. Mocha searched the down-stream voids. The only area that was interesting to Mocha was the water from the culvert. The volume of the water was small. It was seepage from the hill, where the tree from her first search was located, and from the church. The pipe on this side of the road was covered with about 4 feet of mud and rocks. This was where storm run off from the road would enter the main stream about 100 feet away.

A Sheriff's Dept. area search dog and cadaver dog team from Riverside searched the site and confirmed areas of interest for excavation by rescue teams and a backhoe. It took hours for the equipment to arrive and uncover the 5-year-old child buried next to the tree described earlier. Once uncovered, I marked the area's GPS coordinates to be radioed to the command post. We waited for the Coroner to arrive and recover the child's body. The excavation resumed and another person was recovered from the same tree area. Mocha and I were released from the command post that evening to return home.

John Thomas
CA-OES

From the Editor:

Happy New Year to everyone! Whew... it looks like we escaped the holidays without a follow-up to 9/11. It certainly behooves us to keep our deployment bags packed though. Speaking of having our bags packed, I recently received this email from my teammate:

Anne:

Are they issuing any winter gear? That's what I, and everyone else, needs. Lord, help us if the enemy is smart enough to hit a winter target.

Apparently, the US Government doesn't know what outdoor enthusiasts have known for years.... that is, "Cotton is Rotten!"

We have fancy ass drugs to save us from VX, but we can't prevent frostbite and hypothermia by issuing the appropriate outdoor gear.

Best regards,

-Blake

Naturally, I found his email to be witty, but also painstakingly TRUE. All I could do was respond with:

Our weather gear is not so good
Our sweatshirts do not have a hood.
My hands are always freezing cold
They don't make gloves my size I'm told.
Our long underwear is kind of "farmy"
But it's leftovers from the US Army.
Cotton pants and cotton shirts
It's the cotton coat that really hurts..
But to train the dogs on a winter's day-
You must shop at Galyans* if you want to play.

(*or R.E.I, Galls, etc.)

And, speaking of playing, I get a lot of calls and emails from handlers who WANT to train a "FEMA dog" but because of location, logistics, local TF restrictions, etc. are unable to be on a task force. Previously, they could train on their own, or with a state US&R team, and they would be allowed to participate in the FEMA disaster search canine evaluation process. Now that DHS/FEMA is funding our tests, a handler must be rostered on a task force to participate in the FEMA evaluation process. It's great that we are now getting such dedicated funding and support from FEMA, but unfortunately we have lost some good dogs & handlers in the process.

To give (non task force) handlers an opportunity to find out what "FEMA training" is all about, I had an open "play day" at the Salt Mine on Sunday, January 11th. I sent an email to all local wilderness teams and told them to forward it to anyone who would be interested. It was sort of an "official **unofficial** FEMA training". I did the same thing one day last year and had 32 handlers show up. This year I had 35 participants including handlers from Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin and Kentucky, as well as teams from Indiana including INTF-1 handlers. It is very rewarding to give handlers a chance to work their dogs on a good rubble pile, practice on "real FEMA" agility equipment, etc. I hope to have another one this spring.

And last, my term on the canine sub-committee now comes to an end. The last 5 years has been a great learning experience. Special thanks to Rory Rehbeck and Bruce Berry for all their support from the Search Working Group. To Bruce Speer (who is also leaving), Ann Wichmann, Teresa MacPherson and Shirley Hammond - I'll miss talking to you guys!!



KUDOS TO.....



DOGTALK is pleased to announce that the following Canine Search Teams have recently gained certification (or **re-certification**) as FEMA US&R Type I or II Canine Search Specialists:

Brea, CA Results – September 2003

Type I Certified: Fernando Pelaez & Rosa (CA-TF2)

Type II Certified: Steve Hilts & Daisy (CA-TF3)

Miami, FL Results – November 2003

Type II Certified: Teresa Gajate & Tory (FL-TF2) and Gail McCarthy & Bacco (MA-TF1)

San Diego, CA Results – December 2003

Type I Certified: Steve Pendergrass & Marcus (CA-TF2), Michael Scott & Billy (CA-TF8), John Thomas & Mocha (CA-TF8), Ron Wechbacker & Manny (CA-TF1), Kent Olson & Thunder (WA-TF1), Debra Tosch & Abby (CA-TF1), Ron von Allworden & Jessie (CA-TF7), Russell Tao & Harry (CA-TF5), Teresa Ortenburger & Ace (CA-TF7) and Bob Macaulay & Orion (CA-TF7)

Type II Certified: Linda D'orsi & Cody (CA-TF8) and Kelly Gordon & Aspen (CA-TF8)

Good luck to all Type I and II teams that are testing in Memphis, Tennessee this weekend!!

What's on the Web????

The Disaster Dog Web Site at <http://www.disasterdog.org> has really grown. In order to make it useful to everyone, I invite you to make suggestions and or comments. Tell us what you would like to see on the web site. Contact Roxanne Dunn at rox@webworkdesign.com

Here is what's on the web site so far...

Applications

- A few task force applications

Articles

- Articles about disaster dogs

Calendar

- Testing and Events

Canine Working Group

- Archive of CWG's Minutes
- CSS General Policies
- Standard Procedures for Canine Search Specialist Certification
- CSS Evaluation changes

Contact Us

- Contact for general information

Database

- Forms for the CSS database

Find a Member

- Regional Contacts

FEMA System

- General information about the FEMA canine search specialist

Forms

- CSS Evaluation Process
- Training tools - lesson plans
- Testing applications
- Evaluator Materials
- Test day forms - debrief
- Evaluator applications
- Dog Screening Aide

Newsletter

- Archives of Dog Talk Newsletter

Training

- Training dates, seminar updates
- Training tools - lesson plans
- Building Marking slide show

Rosters

- Canine Handlers by Alphabetical and by Task Force
- Evaluator Rotation

The Teachers

She just wasn't understanding the idea kept asking questions while her young pup was also trying to figure out this new game of disaster search. One of our handlers turned to me and said "Get Jenner out". She was right. Jenner came out of the truck, 11 years old and with cancer, roaring to go. We put the new handler in the alert tube, told her to hang on for dear life, and let Jenner show her how it was done. Dragged out of the tube, and fighting to hold onto the toy all the way back to me, she never let go. The new handler had a spark in her eye that wasn't there before, as everyone congratulated her and told her stories of how Jenner had trained them.

It made me think of all the old dogs that have trained new handlers, including me, all over this country. I certainly didn't know them all, but got to struggle around in the dirt and the rocks with a fair number of them, and grin and laugh with others as they experienced the incredible intensity of a good dog doing disaster work. There was my own Logan, my original teacher of scent theory, and his compatriots.. Eros, trying to drag me out of a 400 crate and bouncing me all over the rubble Colter, jumping on top of the PAR Course sign during the directability test.....Spice, refusing to get off the teeter-totter until she got the praise she deserved..... Ditto, flawlessly performing the Vat of Acid direct/agility course at Atterbury. Cayman's great heart, Barkley, Hunter and his incredible sliding stop, Fuyu and Thunder and their impeccable agility, Seeker, Aladdin and Apollo – holding the toy for their first alerts in the rubble took real courage! So many other dogs fill my memories – Misty, Torrey, Cody, Rusty, Chipper, Quasar, Lucy, Mercedes, Bailee, Thunder.... Each one special in their own unique way.

I am mixing generations here and I find it difficult to keep the years straight. So many good dogs. The important thing is that each one of these great dogs and all the un-named others, successful or not, taught us something – about diversity, humility, enduring pain and struggle, commitment, accomplishing a difficult goal, laughter, the joy of learning. Perhaps most lasting is the pathway to friends that this goal and these dogs have provided.

Today our FEMA world is filled with great new handlers, with Type I dogs and beyond, our puppies have become the old "teachers", and we have so many bright new prospects – both human and canine. I remember sending off a pup with a young handler, and watching them go through airport security, crying with joy at the team they would become..... the lives they would save, and the future teams they would train. Those great dogs have somehow helped us build a teaching circle – between generations and species – and I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

Ann Wichmann
COTF-1

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January 11, 2004

TO: National Urban Search and Rescue Canine Teams

FROM: Colorado Task Force 1 Canine Handlers

RE: National Training Weekend

Yes, we are going to do it again! On April 2,3, and 4th, 2004, the handlers of Colorado Task Force 1 will host a national training weekend. We have a very large rubble pile at Denver International Airport, and will find as many other fun places to practice as we can. As usual, this is a minimal support event – due to a major mobilization practice the week before, Colorado Task Force 1 will not be able to throw its full support behind this training. As we have done before, the participating teams will all be responsible for making it a valuable and safe training. Expect to rotate between training your dog, being a helper, being a safety officer, and being whoever else we need!

Please let us know if you are interested in attending, and we will send out more details as they develop. Please contact Ann Wichmann, email: awlogan@mindspring.com

FEMA CANINE SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Subcommittee is readying itself to bid farewell to 2 members who have been with us for the past five years. During that time Anne McCurdy and Bruce Speer have been invaluable contributors to the Subcommittee and the system. Thank goodness we will still have them in the system. Anne can put a quality test together faster than anyone I have ever seen. And we will still have Bruce to offer his selfless guidance as an Evaluator and Instructor. But they will be sorely missed on the Subcommittee. As the Rotation process concludes next week, we should know who the new members will be. They have big shoes to fill.

As the 2004 test schedule gets into full swing, TN will lead the way with its first Type I & II combo evaluation. We are in the process of firming up some SOPs for hosting TFs to help them out with the process. Sorry, TN, that they weren't finished in time for you! Meanwhile, all TFs should call your Rep for guidance.

Concerning the Evaluator Rotation Roster, Dean Scott (Program Manager/ DHS/FEMA) will provide the current list of evaluators from which a hosting TF may choose 1 per pile—the picks may not be combined on any one pile. Dean will fill in the rest of the slots, giving each evaluator 3 chances to respond before dropping to the bottom of the list. Any qualified Lead may be asked to fill the position of “Chief” Evaluator who will be the overall Lead and the POC for the Evaluation weekend. Refusals to Evaluate or for Lead positions will not be judged or cloud your name. No reasons need to be given. If you need to block out a period of time up to 6 months, so as not to be called, this may be done to avoid a refusal and keep your position on the roster.

If a TF is using a new site for the first time, it must be certified prior to the test—Type I by a Type I Lead and a Type II site by a Type II or Type I Lead. But the hosting TF will not be responsible for compensating the evaluator to certify the site.

The new DHS/FEMA test certificates have been issued and are in the mail. If you are one of the many teams anxiously waiting for yours, let your Rep know if you don't get it by the end of January.

The CSST manual is soon to be posted on the website, disasterdog.org. It is meant to be a reference tool. It is a living document, constantly being updated. The posted copy may not include changes in process, but is a handy training aide.

New Evaluators approved to begin the Level I shadow process:

Mark Dawson MATF1 Handler
Garrett Dyer VATF1 STM
Rex Ianson, CATF-3 STM

Julie Noyes COTF1 Handler
Sonja Heritage VATF1 Handler

Woo Hoo!

There is an Ops Working Group meeting next week which should result in a lot more news—stay tuned.....

Teresa MacPherson
Sec, CSC
1-9-04

Please forward any news, scheduled events, letters to the editor, or other info you want disseminated via **DOGTALK**, the underground canine newsletter to Anne McCurdy: At trout@clarian.org