



DOG TALK

The official **unofficial** newsletter for FEMA dog handlers

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In this issue:

- Update from Texas
- Tips from a New Shadow
- 2006 Testing Dates
- Conference – K-9 Down
- Conference – K911 Emergency Life Support
- Rumor Mill
- In Passing
- Kudos
- From the Editor – Lessons Learned

Howdy from Texas!

Howdy from Texas and 'thanks' to those of you who attended our March training weekend at Disaster City and helped make it an excellent training opportunity for all. We had 50 handlers in attendance and worked close to a dozen problems each day. We were divided into groups of varying training levels and multiple task forces, acting as victims for each other and coming up with our own training plans. Because Disaster City has three rubble sites and several other training props, we had multiple training areas at each station we rotated through. Our group leaders managed our rotation order so that we worked very efficiently and ran multiple problems for each dog at each station.

The benefits of our training weekend were many:

- * Having the opportunity to work with handlers from so many task forces. Attending handlers were from TX, FL2, NM, CA8, MD, NV, CA4, MA, VA1, CA5, PA, NE, OH, CO and IN
- * Being victim (helper) for new dogs
- * Working creative training problems
- * Getting feedback from fresh sets of eyes
- * Seeing happy, satisfied dogs and handlers
- * Running so many training problems that all of the handlers wanted to be victims on the last rotation on Day 2!

Our training weekend is an annual event so we hope to see new faces and old friends next year. We did have to set up a waiting list this year since we limit attendance, but all of those on the list were given the opportunity to attend due to cancellations. So y'all plan to come to Texas next spring!

Susann Brown
TX-TF1



Shadowing my first CE (Type I)

After over 15 years in the field with Search Dogs, I shadowed my first CE in Sacramento. I thought those of you preparing to take the Type I test, might want to consider some problems that came up for some of the teams:

Not maintaining control of your dog (a ground rule violation). One's dog leaving their pile to search another pile while disregarding the handlers recall or ignoring the handler's commands while searching the correct pile shows a nicely motivated dog that is not working as a TEAM with the handler. Evaluators were concerned that the dogs would not be reliable in the field (I agree). Possibly rushing past victims in it's sector, to go after ones that it liked better and/or get killed by equipment or traffic (endangering the handler also). Those of us working in New York (tight controlled hazardous areas) or New Orleans (wide open hazardous are as) could not have been effective without good control. In real life we do not repeatedly send our dogs into a sector, we thoughtfully sweep it once and move on to the next sector (praying we did not miss anybody).

Little victim loyalty. Dogs visiting victims multiple times and being almost indifferent to them at times (particularly when the handler is out of sight), even when it clearly knows their location, is also scary. The thought of a dog picking and choosing which victims it wants to alert on would make it of little value on a mission. I would reconsider your reward system and the skill of your victims, as the only reason for a dog to be on a search, is his NEED to find a victim to alert on.

Search Plan. Many teams did not offer a search plan before they began their searching. They will want to hear what you plan is, considering terrain and wind, and changes during the search.

Whole Perimeter. Most teams did not take advantage of the down wind side of the perimeter pile that also had the best view of the pile. It appeared that they did not believe they could use it (Where all the evaluators were standing).

Happy Hunting,
Tony Zintsmaster

TESTING ...1,2,3

It has been confirmed that the CA June CP will be converted to a two day CE (Certification Evaluation). So just six Canine Evaluations during 2006:

**March in CA
April in MA
May in CO
July in WA
Oct in TX
Nov in TN**

Space is still available!!!!!!!!!!!!

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Media Contact: Kristen Levine
727-480-8030

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kristen@FetchingCommunications.com

Professional K-9 Handlers Will be Put to the Test With "Real Life" Emergencies

A Successful Program Returns to Tampa

Tampa, FL -- Deputy Metcalf starts an IV on an "injured" dog, while MPO Middleton uses an 18 gauge needle to relieve another dog's serious stomach condition, known as bloat. Luckily, time is not critical for these K-9's. These emergencies have been staged. It's all part of a program to teach working dog handlers how to respond to a real life K-9 crisis, in the line of duty. After all, many of these dogs have dangerous jobs. And with danger, often comes injury.

Police officers, firefighters, medics, search and rescue teams and military dog handlers from across Florida, will participate in "**K-9 Down**" on **Saturday April 29 and Sunday April 30, 2006, in Tampa**. This highly specialized program will train them to save man's best friend in an emergency. They will receive hands-on training on everything from determining vital signs and oxygen administration, to treating gunshot and burn wounds, fluid therapy, poison care and more.

Last year's program was an overwhelming success. Deputy Don Metcalf of the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office found it particularly helpful. He says, "The things we learned were well above and beyond the basic first aid we learn in K-9 school. Book learning is great, but being able to have a dog there to perform an IV on, is a great value to me. The veterinarians were very knowledgeable. They gave real life experiences of things they actually see come into the emergency room."

The course will be taught by board certified veterinary specialists from Florida Veterinary Specialists and University of Florida Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital. Participation is by invitation only. "This course is unique. It's not general care. It's a very focused presentation for specific circumstances," says Dr. Neil Shaw, Medical Director for Florida Veterinary Specialists.

The course will provide numerous visual opportunities for media. The media is invited to see first hand, the **demonstrations with actual dogs**, including: bandaging, oxygen administration, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, transport techniques and much more.

K-9 Down has been made possible by Florida Veterinary Specialists Charitable Foundation. It will be located at Florida Veterinary Specialists and Cancer Treatment Center, a state of the art 24-hour specialty referral and emergency practice. The address is: 3000 Busch Lake Blvd., Tampa. For more information, go to www.fvs.com



K911: EMERGENCY LIFE SUPPORT FOR THE SEARCH & RESCUE DOG

We are pleased to announce the dates for the spring 2006 conference:

The conference will be on Saturday & Sunday, May 6th & 7th, at the campus of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, MI.

Saturday, May 6th: Hands-on skills lab, in the afternoon, at the West Michigan Regional Laboratory (limited to 24 registrants) - open to individuals already trained to perform emergency life support skills on people (IE, the focus will be on how to perform these skills on dogs).

Sunday, May 7th: Full day of lectures at the Prince Conference Center - open to any canine handler that would like to learn more information about helping their partner stay alive until appropriate veterinary care can be accessed.

Like last fall's conference, we are in the process of securing MCOLES funding and CE credit availability.

Please visit our website at www.wmrl.net and click on the K911 link; the site will be updated frequently as we secure our speakers, finalize the lecture outline, costs, etc.

For any additional questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at wmrl@calvin.edu, or at 616-526-8440.

Thank you!

Meghan VanBeek
K911 Registration Coordinator

The Rumor Mill Demystified and Other Interesting Info:

- ✂ The CSST can be delivered outside of FEMA, but there will be **no FEMA certificate issued**. It would be a certificate of completion of the National US&R CSST course. We want to share our information, but FEMA cannot issue certificates outside of the FEMA system.
- ✂ The current k9 roster will be distributed to the Canine Coordinators after each test.
- ✂ There will also be a new process for applying to test. The budget cuts resulting in the test cuts have resulted in overbooked tests!

Attention Canine Coordinators--Mark your calendar!!! Canine Coordinator
Call May 30th, 2006 @ 1400 EDT.

Attention Evaluators—Conference Call to be scheduled for July.
Meanwhile...its absolutely imperative that you **document legibly** on your score sheets as to what the dog and handler did on the search sites. Especially important for the failed attempts, these score sheets are legal documents.

Regarding bringing dogs when evaluating.....If you are driving, if you don't impact the test, if you don't interface with the IC about it, and if you don't abuse the privilege....OK....but this could change if there are any more complaints.



Jesse

In Passing

Jesse my precious Yellow Labrador Retriever, know affectionately as “Punky” left our planet for other dimensions on October 28th 2005. Her undeniable affection, drive, and determination made her my best friend and partner for over fourteen years. I'll miss her every day until I join her in that great frisbee park she is running in now. While Jesse was here, she was a SAR dog for Mid Atlantic Search and Rescue, Rocky Mountain Search Dogs, Summit County Search and Rescue, certified twice as a type 1 FEMA collapse rescue search dog and State of Utah POST certified search dog.

Jesse's positive attitude and confidence carried her through situations most people and dogs would crumble in. She was alert, attentive, willing to turn the other cheek, or let some other less confident dog nail her, and just shake it off and get back to work. She never failed me. She made my job of being a dog handler easy.

I can't even start to recall all of the memories. The spontaneous visits to neighbors to empty the stale dog food from their dog's food bowl. Days spent swimming in mountain lakes, and both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Back packing in southern Utah, Wyoming, California and Colorado. She was my best friend, and sole mate, she will be missed by me for the rest of my life.

So to all of you who knew Jesse and helped in our training, from both of us - thanks and good-bye.

Nancy Cleveland



☆☆☆☆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** Canine Search Specialists:

☆☆ **Sacramento, CA Results – March 25 & 26, 2006**

Type I Certified: Hilda Wood & Ranger (FL-TF1), Peter Sellas & Blue (CA-TF6), Carol Carlucci & Sonny (CA-TF6), Marc Valentine & Val (CA-TF5), Russel Tao & Andy (CA-TF5), Deresa Teller & Ranger (CA-TF1) and Ed Apple & Rain (TN-TF1), Sonja Heritage & Drako (VA-TF1), Chase Wilson & Jager (CA-TF3), Tom Carney & Gypsy (CA-TF3), John Dean & Red (AZ-TF1) and Adam Skiver & Pic (AZ-TF1)

From the Editor: Lessons Learned

Apparently, I am not learning my lesson quickly enough. I assumed that if I did volunteer search & rescue for say, 14 years, I would have a pretty good understanding of disasters. And responding to man-made incidents (World Trade Center) as well as natural disasters (Floyd, Isabelle, Rita, Katrina...) would have made me a well-rounded and empathetic person. But low and behold – last fall, Hurricane Wilma flooded our house in the Florida Keys. We had 18 inches of water in the lower level (flooding our washer/dryer and a pick-up truck) and a yard FULL of debris. My husband Joe was gone 2 months cleaning it up.

OK then – THAT should cover me, right? I have now seen it first-hand. What an experience – what a mess. Since we didn't live their full time – it was not as mentally devastating as it was to the neighbours who lost more of their personal belongings.

Fast forward to Friday evening March 31st, 2006 – the storm warning says there is a chance of a big hailstorm, Joe and I leave the house to drop off my truck at his shop 1.5 miles away so it doesn't get hail dings. We come back TEN MINUTES later, and can't get down our own street. A TORNADO had hit our street. All power lines are down with sparks flying, huge trees are blocking all access to our house, it is pouring rain, pitch black and I am in my SLIPPERS!!! The worst – the DOGS are home alone inside. It took 20 minutes to climb over the piles of downed trees that started in the street and went right up to the front door. The dogs were not at all pleased about being left alone in the house during the event. Taylor still won't go in the house alone. Joe's truck was crushed by a big tree. The 1999 Jaguar (I have wanted a Jag for 25 years and had only had it 2 weeks) was in the garage where a tree fell and it got dinged/scratched. Power (water, TOILETS) was out for a couple of days. We need a new roof (we are one of the "blue roofs" now), new windows, new siding, new out-building, and new grill... The worst is that we lost 5 acres of beautiful old trees. They were either pulled out by the roots, or snapped off like toothpicks. The yard is completely destroyed. You can build a new house – but those trees will never come back like they were during my lifetime.

Two IN-TF1 Task Force Leader's came Friday night and brought generators, water, lights and saws and helped start access to the house until 0300 on Saturday. Friends & task force teammates came and helped Saturday and Sunday. They cut trees and hauled wood. They brought food. People I had never met brought food. Once lady even took my wet laundry home and dried it. Saturday, the Red Cross came and brought water, tarps, cookies and "Heater meals". (they swore they were better than "MRE's".... yeah – right). Insurance will pay \$150 for "yard clean-up". (the tree company said we lost \$50,000 worth of trees, and it cost \$4,500 just to clear the driveway).

And just like those people in Biloxi, we wouldn't leave our house afterwards either. Our back doors were blown apart and not able to be secured, and we had a tree coming through the roof. Since our bed was filled with broken glass, we just moved to another bed.

Now I have got to think... WHAT IS IT that I was supposed to learn here that I didn't already know??? I am sure that there is some more profound lesson for me besides "not wearing slippers in a disaster area".

I have to figure it out before I am wiped out by a tsunami or mudslide.

Anne McCurdy

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: amccurdy@clarian.org