

Dog Talk

The official *unofficial* newsletter for FEMA dog handlers

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From the Editor:

Whew.... I have finally recovered from the CP that IN-TF1 hosted on March 8-9, 2008. (That is really my only excuse for not getting a DOGTALK out since last October). What an event that was!! 21 dogs and handlers participated in the snowy/blustery/muddy 2 days. Thanks to help from the great evaluator staff of Gary Hay, Steve Dolezal, Julie Noyes, Lee Turner, Ron Sanders and Deb Burnett. Also thanks to Hilda Wood, Jackie McCarty and Tony Zintsmaster who ran the training piles.

Best of luck to all the handlers who will be testing at upcoming evaluations.



National Canadian Structural Collapse Exercise Cohesive Response Challenges USAR Canine Teams and Introduces New Technology

The largest structural collapse exercise ever conducted in Canada--involving four national USAR Task Forces--was held from November 23-24, 2007 at the Constellation hotel in Toronto, Ontario. Exercise "Cohesive Response" had participation from more than 500 first responders from across Canada, including the host, Heavy Urban Search and Rescue (HUSAR)(CAN-TF3), teams from Calgary (CAN-TF2), Manitoba (CAN-TF4), and Halifax (CAN-TF5) in addition to the Provincial Emergency Response team (PERT) of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), an entire medical group and an USAR research team from Ryerson University. And, of course, there were dogs--dozens of trained USAR canines--training, conducting searches and testing new and experimental equipment.

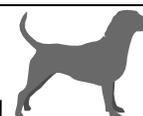
There were three days of preliminary training for the canine teams hosted by the OPP Canine Program at the PERT training site in Bolton, Ontario. SSgt Wayne Jacklin, the OPP Canine Program Coordinator and FEMA Canine Handler and Evaluator Rose DeLuca of Pennsylvania TF1 coordinated the exercises there. This event allowed teams to conduct refresher training, practice rubble search as well as familiarize themselves, and their dogs, with the Canadian Canine USAR standards. Eleven canine teams took the opportunity to qualify to this new national standard over two days.



Figure 1 Canine Handlers on the PERT Training Rubble Pile



Figure 2 Pre-exercise Refresher Training at PERT HQ



At the deployment drill; Exercise “Cohesive Response” one of the exercises revolved around the damaged caused by the detonation of a suspected terrorist bomb, planted in a car within the parking garage of the hotel causing its partial collapse. As the Constellation hotel is in the process of being demolished, The Toronto HUSAR were allowed the leeway to become “creative” in the nature of the situations presented to the TFs and, as a result, allowed for very realistic training involving all manner of crushed and mangled cars, debris and large amounts of rubble.

As the exercise commenced, the parking garage had not been cleared for human entry by the Structural Engineers. Being first on the scene, the canine teams of PERT were called on to conduct the initial searches but were denied the ability to send handlers in with their dogs. Normally, this means the dogs search alone--indicating the presence of live humans beyond the reach of human rescue. In the past, little more could be done for these people until rescuers could safely gain access to the structure—perhaps hours or days later. This time was different.

PERT was testing two new USAR canine systems developed in collaboration with Ryerson University over the past two years and deployed operationally for the first time during this exercise.

The project, known as the Canine Augmentation Technology (CAT) is intended to safely equip search canines with technology that allow the handler and rescuers to see what the dog sees, hear what the dog hears and be aware of the situation of the dog when the handler is not able to go with the dog. Testing has been on-going, but this exercise marked the first time a CAT prototype was operational deployed. CAT, in its current form, is a wireless camera and sensor system attached to a canine body harness, supporting twin pan/tilt low-light ruggedized cameras communicating over a mesh network specifically designed for disaster communication. The system is capable of providing a real-time feed of what is happening at the spot where the dog has indicated survivors.

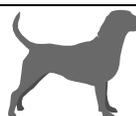


Figure 3 USAR canine Dare wearing CAT

The second system undergoing pre-adoption testing was the Canine Remote Deployment System (CRDS). The CRDS is a remote release mechanism attached to a canine body harness, allowing a dog to carry and automatically drop equipment and supplies loaded in a bag—called an “underdog”—to a casualty when a signal is transmitted from a wireless trigger.



Figure 4 Dare with CRDS and underdog



The systems were used in what has been called the “three dog protocol”. Initially, a “nude” dog is sent in to determine if there are any live people in the wreckage. If the dog gives a bark indication and the location of the dog cannot be seen from outside the hot zone, a second dog is sent in wearing a CRDS unit. When the second dog gives a bark indication, the handler presses a button to release the underdog being carried under the dog. The underdog is essentially a large waterproof, florescent zippered bag that can contain medical supplies, water, a radio or anything else that might be required by a patient to sustain them or assist them in their self-rescue. The underdog can also be equipped with additional light sources to make it easier to find. When the underdog has been dropped, a third dog—wearing a CAT—is sent in. When the dog indicates the casualty’s location, the cameras are turned on and focus on finding the underdog that was dropped by the previous dog. This provides the best chance of spotting the patient’s actual location and situation.

The three-dog protocol was first used by the canine teams mid-morning of the first day of the exercise. A patient was suspected of being buried under rubble in part of the hotel. Const. Mike Dallaire dispatched his dog Moose who quickly indicated the presence of a live human around a wall, out of view of the rescue team. Const. Dennis Harkness’s dog Darby was deployed with a CRDS and an underdog. The CRDS was used to drop medical supplies and radio to the patient however the patient could not use his arms to reach the underdog but could be heard through the radio. Finally the CAT-equipped dog Dare of Const. Kevin Barnum’s was sent in. Using the underdog as reference, the operator could align the cameras resulting in the image below. The image was made available to the HUSAR command post within 30 minutes of the start of the search.



Figure 5 Casualty with underdog nearby

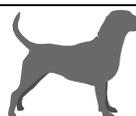
The underdog can be seen in the upper right of the image and the reflective stripe of the fire fighter acting as the patient can be seen in the middle of the image.

As CAT is only a prototype, it became non-functional during this search but the CRDS units were employed successfully more than 25 times throughout the exercise—carrying everything from water, to light sticks to pieces of drywall (to fill out the bags). In most cases the underdog was dropped within ten feet of the target.

Canine teams from around the country were given the opportunity to employ the CRDS on their dogs. One dog from CAN-TF2 (Calgary) named Laddie had also been trained in mountain rescue and was particularly good at burrowing into the rubble. Laddie did this to one patient’s great advantage, allowing the underdog to be dropped on the patient’s chest.

End-ex was called on the evening of the 24th. All scenarios had been played out and a lasagna dinner and beer were served in the midst of the now-cleared debris.

Alexander Ferworn CD, PhD
Associate Professor
Director of Graduate Studies
Department of Computer Science
Ryerson University



Colorado Training Opportunity

Who: Colorado Task Force One (CO-TF1)
What: Open Training for FEMA Canine Search Specialists
When: September 26th & 27th, 2008, Time 0900-1700 each day
Where: Denver International Airport rubble pile



Canine Coordinators/Managers & Handlers:

All FEMA handlers either certified or in training, and State affiliated handlers, are invited. Your teams will have the opportunity to train at a huge multi-dimensional rubble pile, agility station and directional field. Part of the rubble pile is stationary, and other sections get added and taken away due to recycling and reusing of materials. We will set up stations that focus on a particular training topic, with the ability to adjust to level of training. Possible topics include: deep burials, defused scent, multiple victims, wide area search, and alerts. Please feel free to suggest topics of interest to you. We will limit the number of canine teams to 40 to ensure that all have enough training time.

Training will start at DIA Rubble Pile at 0900 on Saturday, September 26th. (see attached map) We'll train until around 1700 both Saturday and Sunday. If we are able to arrange lunches we'll let the participants know via e-mail prior to the training. Otherwise, participants will need to pack their own lunches. The site is too far away from restaurants to leave during the short break for lunch.

Denver International Airport is the closest airport to the site. We recommend the Red Roof Inn, 6890 Tower Road, Denver CO (303-371-5300). We are not going to block out rooms, but your handlers can ask for a government rate when they book a reservation. The hotel is approximately a 15-minute drive from the training site. There are many hotels and restaurants on Tower Road; you can Google the contact numbers for other hotels. Handlers will be responsible for their own transport.

Please write Roxanne Dunn at rdunn@westmetrofire.org.

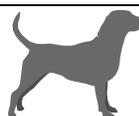
- 1) An issue you'd like to remedy
- 2) A goal you'd like to accomplish
- 3) Dog's name
- 4) Dog's current training level
- 5) Handler's current training level

Spaces are available on first come – first serve basis. We'll divide up into groups in order to work more efficiently. We'll try to accommodate people who want to train with specific people if we can, so list your preference if they have any.

If you are interested in mountain disaster training at an elevation of 10,000 ft in Leadville, CO on September 28th, please contact Pat & Hakan Kaynaroglu at hkaynaroglu@aol.com and express your interest.

We hope to see you in Colorado!

Roxanne Dunn
Canine Coordinator
CO-TF1



☆☆☆☆ Kudos to.....☆☆☆☆

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

☆☆ Columbia, MO Results – October 2007

Don Peyton & Shelby (AZ-TF1), John Dean & Dually (AZ-TF1), Carrie Henger & Doc (CA-TF2), Kevin Skinner & Trevor (CA-TF4), Tim Odebralski & Chili (CA-TF6), Roger Matthews & Loki (CO-TF1), Scott Mullin & Striker (FL-TF1), P.J. Parker & Chase (FL-TF1), Kristian Catapano & Bella (FL-TF1), Melody Greba & Army (IN-TF1), Justin Meyer & Jesse James (MD-TF1), Elaine Sawtell & Kachi (NE-TF1), Greg Sibley & Sydney (NV-TF1), Jason Ritz & Jack (NV-TF1), John Redd & Cassie (NV-TF1), Scott Mateyaschuk & Aragon (NY-TF1) and Pamela Zachritz & Daisy (TN-TF1)

☆☆ Menlo Park, CA Results – November 2007

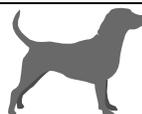
Jonathan Barnes & Jeb (CA-TF4), Mark LePino & Cyril (NV-TF1), Mike Taul & Jessie (CA-TF4), Jason Vasquez & Maverick (CA-TF2) and Michelle Vaughn & Comet (CA-TF4)

☆☆ Davie, FL Results – December 2007

Kathy Petreer & Moss (IN-TF1), Janalee Gallagher & Chance (IN-TF1), Mark Moore & Ali (FL-TF2), Lee Prentiss & Cooper (MA-TF1), Luke Charbonneau & Sam (MA-TF1), Tara Wolcott-Dahlgren & Enzo (MA-TF1), Lisa Myers & Sampson (PA-TF1), Johnny Lane & Dakota (FL-TF2), Lybbie Kienzle & Josh (FL-TF2), Carla Collins & Scooby (TX-TF1), Denise Corliss & Aid’N (TX-TF1), Frank Garcia & Fargo (FL-TF1) and Greg Strickland & Indy (FL-TF1)

☆☆ Miami, FL Results – February 2007

Linda Neimeier & Molly (VA-TF2), Lisa Berry & Gabe (VA-TF2), Marcues Toledo & Belle (CA-TF1), Jason Chapman & Boogie (CA-TF1), Pam Zachritz & Drive (TN-TF1), Tommy Kelley & Zip (TN-TF1), Gary Durian & Baxter (CA-TF2), Ricardo Palomino & Primer (FL-TF2), Ann Wichmann & Lance (CO-TF1), Anne Dottore & Shotgun Shooter (IN-TF1), Steve Swaney & Icon (CA-TF8), Johnny Subia & Lola (CA-TF4), Eric Hanzelka & Ellie (CA-TF4) and Joe Giordano & Axle (NY-TF1)



Memorials

Elvis

My K-9 partner Elvis passed away this morning February 27, 2008. Elvis was born on June 15, 1996 and was my first working dog. Elvis was advanced certified through the Massachusetts Urban Search and Rescue FEMA Team (MATF-1) based in Beverly, Massachusetts. He was also a member of the State of Connecticut's Urban Search and Rescue Team (CTTF-1) based in Hartford, Connecticut.

Elvis was blessed with the drive, persistence and determination needed to do search and rescue. He was wilderness certified in 1998. We immediately went on to work toward our FEMA certification, although we had some bumps along the way. Most of these "bumps" were due to my lack of understanding, not his. We passed the FEMA Type II test in Washington State in 1999. In August of 2000 we passed our Type I test in San Diego, working thru the mid-day sun and finding all 6 victims. We re-certified again in 2002 in Ontario, California. Yes, you can see the pattern. He loved the West Coast!



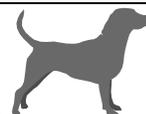
Then came 9-11 and we deployed to the World Trade Center. For 8 nights he worked diligently and dutifully for every minute he was called on. One of the things I will remember from that deployment was the night our search team manager asked if we would work with a crew from FDNY. We went out with one other member from our MATF-1 Task Force onto the pile. We arrived at an area with a 24-foot extension ladder sticking up from a hole. The FDNY Captain looked at me and said, "Do you want us to carry your dog down or will you?" I looked at the ladder and said, "No" to both. I told the Captain, "He will walk down himself." The Captain looked at me like I was nuts. I sent the other MATF-1 member down to kick the ladder out and gave Elvis the command climb down. He quickly went down and the Captain looked at me said, "I have seen it all. You can do whatever you want!" Elvis was honored for his work at the Trade Center. He was mentioned in several books including DogNY, which portrays a statue bearing his image and representing all of the FEMA canines for their work at Ground Zero. Other books featuring Elvis include Never Forget by Mitchell Fink and Lois Mathias and Dog Heroes of September 11th by Nona Kilgore Bauer. Greenwich Magazine also featured him in their August 2005 issue. He frequently appeared on News Channel 12's Pet Talk show where the host provided cake and party hats for his birthday and retirement parties. Yes, we all wore the party hats! He also led the pledge of allegiance for the President of the United States (and met George Bush!) at a fund raiser in Greenwich, as well as at the Republican Town Meeting when he returned from Ground Zero.

Elvis and I also responded to a number of wilderness search calls for missing persons in the State of Connecticut. And, we were called out by the Milford Fire Department in 1999 to help search at the site of a crane collapse. Elvis touched the hearts of people in the town he lived and we frequently performed search demonstrations for the local Boy Scout Troop. Our last deployment was for Hurricane Ernesto in 2006.

In the fall of 2006, we passed our final recertification as a team in Massachusetts. At that test, Elvis again performed so well, negotiating over the rocks and rubble like a young dog. I remember evaluator Pat Kaynaroglu from the Colorado Task Force asking me what I fed him for him in order for him to work like that at the age of 9 ½.

Elvis retired in the summer of 2007, due only to his age and not his drive to do his job. Right up until his last days he was doing short wilderness problems in the woods around our home. He also still loved to do the alert tube for his Frisbee. Elvis loved his Frisbee and I loved throwing it for him. I miss you so much buddy.

Mark Dawson, MA-TF1



Dusty

Early March was a rough time for us, as we lost my cherished search partner, Dusty. He was to be 12 years old in a few days, but life was cut short, as unfair as that always is. Dusty was the best search dog I have ever had. What amazed me was his determination and serious nature when it came to searching. Distractions were not his nature, nor pain as he was such a tough dog. With experience and wisdom, he came into the habit of developing his own search plan and was known to (literally) sass me if I sent him into an area he had already cleared! He really did *get it*.

I have to say that Dusty is the one who taught me the most about dog training. He was an excellent student and had a heart of gold. It took us a few tries to become Type I certified, but of course, the problem turned out to be me. Had we not had these trials and tribulations, I would not have learned as much. Dusty was just "well rehearsed" when it was all said and done. It made the re-certs go smoothly.

During it all, Dusty was always happy. He always had a smile and a wagging tail. He was a wonderful ambassador for USAR.

The day he died he gave me a bold stare and a soft wag. This gave me pause and I momentarily stopped in my tracks, not knowing what was to come. I know that San Rocco is caring for him now. I thank God for allowing me to know such a wonderful dog. We miss you terribly, Dusty-Quinos.

Mary Berry
Bruce Berry
Albuquerque, NM

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

