

# SAR Dog Fact Sheet

## JEFFERSON COUNTY SEARCH DOG ASSOCIATION

When someone is reported lost or overdue, JCSDA is available to respond, day or night, to help in the search effort. SAR Dogs can find:

- ▶ Children lost in the wilderness, parks or hidden in shrubbery around houses
- ▶ Old people who have wandered away from homes and hospitals
- ▶ Hikers and hunters lost in the woods
- ▶ Victims of drowning accidents
- ▶ Victims of avalanche, earthquake, flood, explosion, fire, train wrecks, plane crashes, tornadoes and other disasters

The Jefferson County Search Dog Association is a volunteer organization whose purpose is to provide qualified search and rescue dogs and handlers that assist requesting agencies in searching for individuals who are lost, victims of flash floods, tornadoes, earth quakes and other natural disasters.

There is no cost for our services to the requesting agency or the victim's family. JCSDA is 100% volunteer.

JCSDA will look for lost or missing persons. JCSDA can assist in searches for deceased persons, drown persons, victims of collapsed structure, and article search. Since JCSDA handlers and canines are not law enforcement trained, they will not respond to a search for a felony suspect or for an individual known to be armed and dangerous. JCSDA does not search for bombs or drugs. If you have a question on a particular need, feel free to call.

It is important that search dogs are notified early. Search dogs can be utilized well as a hasty response because they can often cover more area than many ground searchers. JCSDA often searches in the middle of the night, when scenting conditions are optimal for dogs, and when the subject may be stationary. JCSDA does not mind being turned around en-route.

If JCSDA knows of dog teams that are closer to you, who are not members of JCSDA, we will advise you. JCSDA can be used as an additional resource or for a second operational period. The goal is to get the quickest response to the person in need.

JCSDA is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Contact one of the following dispatch phone numbers:

502 314-0061      502 969-9316

Provide information relating to the type of search, location and a contact phone number. Additional information may be requested. A member of JCSDA will return the call as soon as possible.

## HOW DO SAR DOGS WORK?

All humans, alive or dead, constantly emit microscopic particles bearing human scent. Millions of these are airborne and are carried by the wind for considerable distances. The air scenting SAR Dog is trained to locate the scent of any human in a specific search area. The dog is not restricted to the missing person's track and can search long after the track is obliterated. Many air scenting search dogs are also trained in trailing and scent discrimination.

Upon arrival at the search site, dog handlers work directly for their unit's operations leader, who reports to the search boss or incident commander of the local agency. Many units provide their own base camp operation, with trained radio operators, SAR Dog advisors, and other support personnel.

After initial hasty searches of trails and paths, each dog and handler team is usually assigned a segment of the search area to cover systematically. Handlers work their dogs downwind of the section assigned to them or cover the area in a way that provides dogs with the best scenting coverage. Handlers map the area they have covered and report their POD (probability of detection) to the plans section or operations leader upon completing their assignments.

Search dogs can work in areas where other searchers have been, and they can work with other search resources, such as trackers. Using scent articles, they can discriminate for the missing person in heavily populated areas. They can work day or night, in most kinds of weather, and are especially effective where human sight is most limited -- in the dark, in dense woods or heavy brush, in debris (as found in earthquakes, floods, and tornadoes) and under water.

# SAR Dog Fact Sheet

## WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR SAR DOGS AND THEIR HANDLERS?

SAR Dog Handlers must enjoy working with dogs and being in the outdoors in all kinds of weather. They must be physically fit and able to respond to emergencies. They must become proficient in land navigation, map and compass, radio communications, wilderness survival, and first aid. Most units require a minimum of Advanced First Aid with CPR.

SAR Dogs must have trainability, agility, endurance, and the ability to get along with other dogs and people. A search dog is a valued member of his handler's family, and he regards people as his friends. SAR Dogs are usually the larger working and sporting breeds of dogs. Australian Shepherds, Bloodhounds, Border Collies, German Shepherds, Golden Retrievers, Labradoodles and Labradors are among the breeds found on the JCSDA Team.

Most handlers prefer to begin training a young puppy. However, an older dog may be suitable if the dog has already developed a good working relationship with his owner. Dogs trained for SAR-work are never aggressive. There is no place in lost person search for an overly aggressive dog.

It normally takes a year of training - at least twice a week - before a dog and handler team is mission-ready. A candidate's team is evaluated for search proficiency before going on actual missions.

## WHERE ARE SAR DOG UNITS LOCATED?

There are over 150 air scenting search dog units around the country, from Alaska to Georgia and from Maine to California. New units are continually being formed. While specific training methods and operating procedures may vary from unit to unit, the basic concept of searching with air scenting dogs is quite uniform.

Such uniformity enables SAR-responsible agencies to know what to expect when they request search dogs, and to know how to best deploy them in the field. It also enables teams from different units to work together on large-scale searches.

## ARE SAR DOGS CONSIDERED SERVICE ANIMALS WHICH ARE ALLOWED IN PUBLIC PLACES?

In most areas SAR Dogs are allowed the same access as police or service dogs. A SAR Dog in training is NOT the same as an operational SAR Dog. SAR Dogs are usually in the public for a demonstration, booth, informational session, team promotion, award, etc.

SAR Dogs are trained for crowds, machinery, elevators, etc. The team helps by providing booths at events allowing the needed training. It also allows the dog to witness other dogs experiencing the same distractions and will help reduce the stress involved.

When the public approaches the handler watches for any signs of stress or discomfort. Children love to swarm around a cute dog and they all want to hug him at the same time. The dog must always have an "escape path" open to walk away if they feel threatened.



**Jefferson County Search Dog Association**  
**8004 Smyrna Parkway**  
**Louisville, KY 40228**  
**Phone/Fax: 502-969-9316**