

Canines

317.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes guidelines for the use of canines to augment law enforcement services to the community including, but not limited to, locating individuals and contraband and apprehending criminal offenders.

317.2 DEFINITIONS

Apprehension: A suspect surrenders or is otherwise brought into custody as the result of a canine deployment. This may be because the canine was used as trained, or because the suspect surrendered after becoming aware that the canine might be used.

Apprehension With Contact: A canine makes contact with a suspect to bring the person into custody.

Department Designated Trainer: Vancouver Police Officer, qualified through training/experience, to train Police K9 Teams in patrol work and narcotics detection. The trainer will complete a trainer's course through an appropriate canine vendor or training facility. The course should include canine selection, obedience, control work and detection work. The trainer should be recognized by the Washington State Police Canine Association (WSPCA) as a trainer. Within the K9 Unit, a Department Designated Trainer is subordinate to the K9 Supervisor.

Deployment: The specific term for commanding a PSD to track, apprehend a suspect, search for a suspect, search for evidence or search for the odor of controlled substances.

K9 Handler: Vancouver Police Officer who is assigned to the Vancouver Police K9 Unit and has successfully completed Department training.

K9 Warning: Loudly verbalizing or using a public address (PA) system to give a warning that a police service dog is about to be used to search/apprehend a suspect. The warning will include:

1. A statement of authority (e.g. "Police")
2. Instruction to the suspect and/or anyone else in the designated search area (e.g. a command to make their presence known)
3. The consequence if they do not comply (e.g. that they may be bit by the Police Service Dog (PSD))
4. Wait a reasonable amount of time for the suspect to verbally and the physically surrender before using the PSD.

The following is an example VPD K9 warning: "Vancouver Police Canine. You have 5 seconds to make your presence known or a police dog will be sent to find you. When he finds you he will bite you."

On Leash: A PSD that is attached to, and controlled by, a leash in the hands of a K9 Handler.

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Police Service Dog (PSD): A dog owned by the Vancouver Police Department that has been trained to, and certified to, Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission (WSCJTC) policy standards. In addition, the PSD must be approved for duty by the Department Designated Trainer and the Chief of Police through the proper Chain of Command.

Proportional: To be proportional, the level of force applied must reflect the totality of circumstances surrounding the situation at hand, including the nature and immediacy of any threats posed to officers and others. Officers must rely on training, experience, and assessment of the situation to decide an appropriate level of force to be applied. Reasonable and sound judgemental will dictate the force option to be employed. Proportional force does not require officers to use the same type or amount of force as the subject. The more immediate the threat and the more likely that the threat will result in death or serious physical injury, the greater the level of force that may be proportional, objectively reasonable, and necessary to counter it.

317.3 POLICY

It is the policy of the Vancouver Police Department that teams of handlers and canines meet and maintain the appropriate proficiency to effectively and reasonably carry out legitimate law enforcement objectives.

317.4 REQUESTS FOR CANINE TEAMS

Patrol Division members are encouraged to request the use of a canine. Requests for a canine team from Department units outside of the Patrol Division shall be reviewed by the Shift Sergeant.

317.5 SCOPE OF CANINE DEPLOYMENTS

Canine deployments shall be limited to the following situations addressed in this section.

317.5.1 AUTHORIZED FELONY CRIMES

The following felony crimes are generally allowable applications of the Canine Team:

- Burglary, not including trespass with non-violent secondary crimes
- Robbery, not including theft that are accompanied by low level assault
- Homicide
- Assaults I, II, and III, as well as Vehicular Assault
- Kidnapping
- Arson with threat of harm to people
- Domestic violence felony crimes
- Felony sexual assault
- Drive by shooting, not including unlawful discharge of a firearm
- Hit and Run with serious physical injury
- Felony harassment with a weapon displayed or implied

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- Escape I and II
- Unlawful possession of a firearm
- Department of Corrections (DOC) warrant for failure to appear (FTA) or failure to contact (FTC) with original charge on this list

317.5.2 AUTHORIZED MISDEMEANOR CRIMES

The following misdemeanor crimes are generally allowable applications of the Canine Team:

- Domestic Violence Assault, with injury and/or independent witness statements
- Domestic Violence Order Violations that are subject to mandatory arrest violations shall involve the suspect's physical presence at the victim's location or a threat of harm.

317.5.3 NON TACTICAL USE OF CANINE

Canines may be deployed in non-aggressive work such as:

- Searching for evidence, controlled substance(s) or contraband
- Officer may use a trained detection PSD in accordance with Department search and seizure policy and current search and seizure laws

317.5.4 OTHER CANINE DEPLOYMENTS

- For all other crimes where the subject is considered to be armed or there is a threat of harm to the public, approval by an on-scene supervisor with the rank of sergeant or above is needed.
- If the canine unit is being requested outside the city limits, approval from the special operations chain of command, sergeant or above is needed.
- If the decision is made to deploy a K9 Team outside of the above identified parameters, the supervisor making the decision will articulate their reasoning in a police report.
- Canine teams should not be used to apprehend anyone suspected to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol if no other serious crime is involved, nor anyone who is experiencing a behavioral crisis, if no other serious crime is involved.

317.6 PREPARATION FOR DEPLOYMENT

Prior to the use of a canine to search for or apprehend any suspect, the canine handler and/or the supervisor on-scene should carefully consider all pertinent information reasonably available at the time. The information should include, but is not limited to:

- (a) The suspect's known or perceived age
- (b) The severity of the crime
- (c) Whether the suspect poses an immediate threat to the safety of the officers or others
- (d) Whether a suspect is actively resisting arrest or attempting to evade arrest
- (e) The potential for suspect flight, if the canine is not utilized

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- (f) The degree of force that reasonably appears necessary to apprehend the suspect. The use of the canine should be proportional to the threat
- (g) The availability of less intrusive means to apprehend the subject
- (h) Any other requirements in policy 300 - Use of Force
- (i) The legal authority to apprehend the suspect
- (j) If the deployment involves entering a building, do we have the legal authority to do so? (i.e., search warrant or valid warrant exception, such as exigent circumstances or consent)

As circumstances permit, the canine handler should make every reasonable effort to communicate and coordinate with other involved members to minimize the risk of unintended injury.

It is the canine handler's responsibility to evaluate each situation and determine whether the use of a canine is appropriate and reasonable. Both the on-duty supervisor and canine handler have the authority to order that the canine team disengage. It is not necessary that the supervisor and canine handler agree. The canine handler shall have the authority to decline the use of the canine whenever he/she deems deployment is unsuitable.

Unless otherwise directed by a supervisor, assisting members should take direction from the handler in order to minimize interference with the canine.

317.6.1 WARNINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Unless it would increase the risk of injury or escape, a clearly audible verbalizing or using a PA system to give a warning that a PSD is about to be used to search/apprehend a suspect.

If a warning is not to be given, the canine handler, when practicable, should first advise the supervisor of his/her decision before releasing the canine. In the event of an apprehension, the handler shall document in any related report how the warning was given and, if none was given, the reasons why.

317.7 CANINE IN PUBLIC AREAS

The canine should be kept on a leash when in areas that allow access to the public. Exceptions to this rule would include specific law enforcement operations for which the canine is trained.

- (a) A canine shall not be left unattended in any area to which the public may have access.
- (b) When the canine vehicle is left unattended, all windows and doors shall be secured in such a manner as to prevent unauthorized access to the dog. The handler shall also ensure that the unattended vehicle remains inhabitable for the canine.

317.8 HANDLER COMPENSATION

The canine handler shall be available for call-out under conditions specified in the Canine Manual.

The canine handler shall be compensated for time spent in the care, feeding, grooming and other needs of the canine in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), and according to the terms of the collective bargaining agreement/memorandum of understanding (29 USC § 207).

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317.9 TRAINING

Before assignment in the field, each canine team shall be trained and certified to meet current Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC) standards, Washington State Police Canine Association (WSPCA) standards or other recognized and approved certification standards. Cross-trained canine teams or those canine teams trained exclusively for the detection of narcotics shall be trained and certified to meet current nationally recognized standards or other recognized and approved certification standards established for their particular skills (WAC 139-05-915).

The canine coordinator shall be responsible for scheduling periodic training for all Department members in order to familiarize them with how to conduct themselves in the presence of Department canines. The Special Operations Sergeant, or designee, will be assigned as the canine coordinator.

All canine training should be conducted while on-duty unless otherwise approved by the canine coordinator or Shift Sergeant.

317.9.1 CONTINUED TRAINING

Each canine team shall thereafter be recertified to current CJTC, WSPCA or other recognized and approved certification standards on an annual basis. Additional training considerations are as follows:

- (a) Canine teams should receive training as defined in the current contract with the Vancouver Police Department canine training provider.
- (b) Canine handlers are encouraged to engage in additional training with approval of the canine coordinator.
- (c) To ensure that all training is consistent, no handler, trainer or outside vendor is authorized to train to a standard that is not reviewed and approved by this department.

317.9.2 FAILURE TO SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE TRAINING

Any canine team failing to graduate or obtain certification shall not be deployed in the field for tasks the team is not certified to perform until graduation or certification is achieved. When reasonably practicable, pending successful certification, the canine handler shall be temporarily reassigned to regular patrol duties.

317.9.3 TRAINING RECORDS

All canine training records shall be maintained in the canine handler's and the canine's training file.

317.9.4 TRAINING AIDS

Training aids are required to effectively train and maintain the skills of canines. Officers possessing, using or transporting controlled substances or explosives for canine training purposes must comply with federal and state requirements regarding the same. Alternatively, the Vancouver Police Department may work with outside trainers with the applicable licenses or permits.

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317.10 CANINE OPERATIONAL MANUAL

As a supplemental document to this policy, the Canine Operational Manual has been developed to provide further assistance in the management and operations of the Canine Unit.

[Click here to review the K9 Manual](#)