

CANINE UNIT

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Omaha Police Department (OPD) to provide professionally trained and maintained Canine Teams to assist in the daily operations of the department. Canine Teams assigned to the Canine Unit are commanded by a sergeant and report to the Tactical Operations Section Captain.

PROCEDURE:

I. Deployment

- A. Canine Teams patrol in modified, specially-equipped, cruisers designated and clearly marked "Canine Unit."
- B. If a Canine Team is not on-duty and a serious incident justifies a call-in, command officers will contact the Canine Unit Sergeant or Tactical Operations Section Captain for authorization to call in a Canine Team.
- C. The following calls are designated for automatic Canine Team response while on routine patrol:
 - 1. Burglary in-progress calls, intrusion alarms, and/or robbery alarms when evidence of forced entry exists or a suspect is still believed to be in the area.
 - 2. All felony or serious misdemeanor crimes where the suspect has fled on foot and a possible tracking scenario, suspect search, area search, or building search could develop.
- D. The Canine Team may be used by Uniform Patrol Bureau (UPB) officers for searches, narcotics detection, criminal apprehensions, and tracking as described in this policy.

NOTE: The Canine Unit uses both dual-purpose canines (canines used for both narcotics detection and criminal apprehensions), as well as canines used only for narcotics detection.
- E. The final decision to apply a canine to a specific police operation will remain with the Canine Handler.
- F. A detailed description of the operations and administration of the Canine Unit is available in the Canine Unit's Standard Operating Procedure Manual.

II. General Guidelines for OPD Sworn Employees

- A. Officers shall not, under any circumstances, strike a Canine Handler or engage in any horseplay with a Canine Handler while the Handler's canine is present. All officers shall remember that the canine has been trained to protect the Canine Handler from any perceived threat.
- B. Any violations of the below-listed rules will immediately be reported through the Canine Unit's chain of command for possible disciplinary action. Officers will never:
 - 1. Strike or discipline the police canine.
 - 2. Tease or agitate the canine (inside or outside of the Canine Team's vehicle).
 - 3. Give the canine any commands.

4. Feed the canine without the Canine Handler's permission.
5. Attempt to play with the canine without first obtaining the Canine Handler's permission and having the Canine Handler present.
6. Enter the Canine Team vehicle without the Canine Handler's knowledge or presence unless in an emergency situation.
7. Officers will never remove the canine from the Canine Team vehicle or other area of confinement without the Canine Handler's knowledge and presence.

III. Use of the Canine Unit

- A. The Canine Team may be used by UPB officers for the following types of calls.
 1. Building Searches.
 - a. Officers will immediately request a Canine Team through the 911 Dispatch if they determine that a burglary has occurred to a structure and the possibility exists that suspects may still be inside the structure.
 - b. Prior to the arrival of the Canine Team, the following steps will be taken.
 - (1) The outside perimeter will be secured.
 - (a) If a window has been broken or removed, officers will relay this information to the responding Canine Team.
 - (b) It may be necessary to obtain a key to enter the building safely.
 - (2) When possible, take up positions around the building, but not next to it. Officers will use cover and concealment to their full advantage.
 - (3) Attempt to close any opened doors or windows before the arrival of the Canine Team. This will help to contain available scent, as well as to contain the canine during the search.
 - (4) No one will enter the building before the Canine Team arrives.
 - (5) Advise the responding Canine Team of the perimeter positions and descriptions of any plain-clothes officers on the scene.
 - c. After a tactical approach to the building is conducted, the Canine Handler will issue warnings to anyone in the structure advising them that the police are present, and that they need to sound off, or a canine will be sent into the structure to locate them.
 - d. If the canine alerts to a suspect(s) or is involved in a bite situation within the building, officers will not leave the Canine Handler unless they are instructed to do so.
 - (1) Tactics shall be considered as officers work their way to the location of the alert or the apprehension.
 - (2) Officers shall not move ahead without first clearing each room.

- e. If an apprehension has taken place, officers will not interfere with the commands of the Canine Handler and will not come in contact with the suspect or canine until told to do so by the Canine Handler.
- f. The back-up officer's job is to assist the Canine Handler in making the area safe to approach.
 - (1) When searching a building, the Canine Handler is constantly watching their canine and is not watching the surrounding area.
 - (2) It is the back-up officer's responsibility to cover the Canine Handler during a search of this nature. The officer's attention shall be on the entire surrounding area and not focused on the canine and the suspect.

2. Tracking.

- a. Tracking of a suspect or suspects when physical presence has been recent may be a useful application of a Canine Team.
- b. When a Canine Team is requested for tracking, the below-listed procedures will be followed for the maximum effectiveness and safety of the canine tracking the suspect.
 - (1) Canines track on the principle of crushed or disturbed ground vegetation. It is imperative that officers do not disturb the search area before the Canine Team arrives.
 - (2) Officers will set up a perimeter, when possible. Officers will maintain visual contact of their assigned areas from vehicles or buildings.
 - (3) If persons are available who know the last location of the suspect(s), officers will have them stand by to speak with the arriving Canine Handler so that an accurate starting point may be established.
 - (4) One or more back-up officers may be used to assist in the search.
 - (a) Officers assigned as back-up officers will stay with the Canine Team as directed by the Canine Handler.
 - i. If the Canine Handler stops, back-up officers will stop and wait for the Canine Team to continue the track.
 - ii. If it becomes necessary for a back-up officer to stop while the Canine Team is tracking, they will advise the Canine Handler immediately.
 - (b) Back-up officers will be on the alert for movement and suspect(s) hidden in the area. It is not necessary for the back-up officers to watch the canine.
 - (5) Normally, a 15-foot tracking line will be attached to the canine during this type of deployment. The canine may actually be right on top of the suspect before an officer knows the suspect is there.

3. Area Searches.

- a. A Canine Team may be used in an area search mode, called the “patrol route,” within a contained outside area.
- b. Criteria to be considered before requesting a Canine Team Area Search.
 - (1) During an area search, as in a building, the canine is using the nose to locate a human scent cone. Officers will consider weather and other environmental factors before requesting the Canine Team.
 - (2) The Canine Handler must know a suspected area in which to search.
- c. Area Search Procedures.
 - (1) A perimeter will be secured in the same manner as a tracking situation.
 - (2) The canine will be directed to search by the Canine Handler or will be escorted on a patrol route to assist in locating the scent cone of a suspect. The wind direction will be an important factor.
 - (3) As in a tracking situation, all back-up officers shall be aware of movement in and around the search area.
 - (4) The Canine Handler shall watch the canine to see if the canine makes an alert.
 - (a) Once the canine has alerted the presence of a human scent in the area, the Canine Handler will announce that the canine is about to be deployed unless circumstances make such announcements impractical or tactically unsafe.
 - (5) If the canine alerts to a suspect(s) or is involved in a bite situation, officers shall not leave the Canine Handler unless they are instructed to do so.
 - (a) Tactics shall be considered as officers work their way to the location of the alert or apprehension. During an area search with limited concealment and cover, officers may become very vulnerable.
 - (6) If an apprehension is taking place, officers shall not interfere with the commands of the Canine Handler and shall not come in contact with the suspect or canine until told to do so by the Canine Handler.

4. Criminal Apprehensions by Canine.

- a. The below-listed procedures will be followed for maximum effectiveness and safety during canine criminal apprehensions.
 - (1) When determining whether or not to deploy a canine for criminal apprehensions, the Canine Handler will take the totality of the circumstances into account. In particular, the Canine Handler will consider the following.
 - (a) The severity of the crime that the suspect is wanted for.
 - (b) Whether the suspect presents a potential threat to the safety of officers or others.

- (c) Whether the suspect is actively resisting arrest or attempting to escape by fleeing or hiding from officers.
- (2) The Canine Handler will, if feasible and tactically safe to do so, verbally warn the suspect(s) that a police dog will be released if the suspect does not stop.
- (3) The Canine Handler will not send the canine to apprehend a suspect if it is known that the suspect is being directly pursued by a police officer on foot.
- (4) The Canine Handler, upon releasing the canine, will advise 911 Dispatch that the canine has been deployed on an apprehension.
- (5) All officers in the area, except the Canine Handler, shall **STAND STILL WHEN THE CANINE HAS BEEN DEPLOYED ON AN APPREHENSION.**
 - (a) Back-up officers in the area of a canine apprehension are very vulnerable. If an officer is moving, they shall **STAND STILL** and wait for instructions from the Canine Handler.
- (6) Contact by the canine may be unavoidable if an officer is moving. If an officer is bitten by a canine, the officer will stop moving, and the Canine Handler will immediately call off the canine.

NOTE: Officers will not attempt to fight the canine or pull away. After the canine has been released, officers will not make any sudden movements and will follow all instructions of the Canine Handler.

5. Evidence Searches.

- a. The below-listed procedures will be followed for maximum effectiveness and safety during evidence searches by the Canine Team.
 - (1) It is extremely important that the area to be searched is not disturbed.

NOTE: Officers shall not contaminate the area prior to the canine search.
 - (2) The decision to search on- or off-leash will be made by the Canine Handler.
 - (3) In order to locate evidence left or dropped from the crime scene and any personal items lost by the suspect, the Canine Handler must have a general idea where to search.
 - (4) Officers will follow the procedures for Canine Vehicle Searches or Canine Building Searches, as appropriate, described in this policy.

6. Narcotics Detection.

- a. The use of the Canine Team in narcotics detection is a valuable tool in drug enforcement. The canine's ability to alert on a narcotic is directly related to the availability of the scent. The below-listed procedures will be followed for maximum effectiveness and safety during narcotics detection or evidence searches by the Canine Team.

- b. Canines used to search for controlled substances in vehicles, residences, buildings, and suspected areas are available on an “on call” basis.
- c. Officers who require the assistance of a canine to search for controlled substances will:
 - (1) Possess a search warrant, consent to search form, or articulated reasonable suspicion prior to requesting a Canine Team.
 - (2) Contact 911 Dispatch and request the assistance of an on-duty, narcotics Canine Team.
 - (a) If an on-duty, narcotics Canine Team is not available, 911 Dispatch may contact outside law enforcement agencies for an on-duty narcotics canine.
 - (b) If no on-duty narcotics canines can be located, 911 Dispatch will contact the OPD Canine Unit Sergeant via phone to request a narcotics Canine Team.
 - i. The Canine Unit Sergeant will contact the requesting officer(s) to determine if the situation requires the call-out of an off-duty, narcotics Canine Team.
 - ii. The Canine Unit Sergeant will contact an off-duty, OPD narcotics Canine Team to respond when appropriate.
 - (3) When requesting the Canine Team for use in searching a vehicle that is suspected to contain illicit drugs, officers will follow the procedures for Canine Vehicle Searches as described in this policy.
 - (a) Searches of vehicles will normally only be conducted for large quantities of narcotics that are believed to be hidden in sealed compartments.
 - (4) When the canine is used for narcotics detection in a building or structure, officers will follow the procedures for Canine Building Searches described in this policy.
- d. Upon arrival at the scene, the requesting officer will brief the Canine Handler on the:
 - (1) Need for the canine.
 - (2) Search procedures conducted prior to the arrival of the Canine Handler.
 - (3) Areas they wish to have searched.
- e. The Canine Handler shall request that officers secure the area and remove all suspects, observers, and other officers from the immediate search area prior to searching the vehicle, residence, building, or property for suspected controlled substances.
- f. At the completion of the search, the Canine Handler will advise the requesting officer of any items located and return the scene over to the requesting officer.

- g. It is the responsibility of the requesting officer to determine if they will make an arrest based on the evidence that is recovered and to take persons and/or evidence into custody.
 - h. Canine Handlers will **NOT** be responsible for turning in evidence recovered from a requested search.
7. Canine Vehicle Searches.
- a. The Canine Handler will be responsible for making certain that the narcotics detection is initiated at a safe location. No detection operations will occur when the Canine Handler has deemed the area unsafe.
 - b. It is the responsibility of the requesting officer and back-up officers to maintain observation of the operator or any occupants. The Canine Handler must pay a great deal of attention to the canine during a narcotics search.
 - c. If the interior will be entered by the canine, the requesting officer will first take custody of any narcotics or paraphernalia in plain view. All occupants and food will be removed.
8. Canine Building Searches.
- a. The requesting officer will conduct a search of the area with the Canine Handler.
 - (1) This search will be conducted without the canine to take into custody any narcotics or paraphernalia in view.
 - b. The Canine Handler will make certain of a safe working environment for the canine.
 - (1) If the Canine Handler has deemed the area unsafe, the canine will not be used for a detection operation.
 - c. All persons on the premises shall be removed or placed in one area prior to beginning the narcotics search.

EXCEPTION: In the event of a consent search, the owner or the owner's representative will be permitted inside the structure.
 - d. It is the responsibility of the requesting officer or back-up officer to maintain observation of the owner or representative. The Canine Handler must pay a great deal of attention to the canine during a narcotics search.
9. Locating lost persons or searching for victims of natural disasters.

IV. Canine Use of Force Investigations

A. Reporting Requirements.

- 1. Canine use of force incidents shall be documented on a Chief's Report ([OPD Form 214](#)). If the result of the use of force results in injury to a suspect, an Injury Incident Report shall be completed by the Canine Handler. A Supplementary Report ([OPD Form 200](#)) may also be utilized.

2. When a request to investigate a canine use of force incident is received, the responding sergeant will:
 - a. Make certain the suspect is transported to the hospital for treatment, regardless of their wishes.
 - b. Contact the Forensic Investigations Unit and request photos of the bite wounds after medical attention has been provided.
 - (1) It is important to document not only the location of injuries or bites, but also the absence of injuries or bites.

EXAMPLE: If the suspect was bitten on the leg, have photos taken of the suspect's torso with shirt removed (if male), or both arms and abdomen (if female) to show the absence of injuries or bites in these areas.

NOTE: If the suspect refuses to cooperate, the refusal will be documented, and no photos will be taken.
 - (2) Document the name of the responding Forensic Investigations employee.
 - c. Document the name of the treating physician and what treatment was given.

EXAMPLE: "The wound was cleaned and irrigated, and the suspect was given Tylenol."

 - (1) Document if x-rays were taken and the results of the x-rays.
 - d. Make certain the originating officer books or cites the suspect for the proper charges and completes the appropriate PortalONE Incident Report.
 - e. Retrieve copies of all originating officer's reports on scene, including Incident Reports, Supplemental Reports, Property Reports, and any other reports made.
 - f. Make certain the canine officer completes the following reports.
 - (1) Supplementary Report ([OPD Form 200](#)).
 - (2) Chief's Report ([OPD Form 214](#)).
 - (3) Incident-Injury Report ([OPD Form 189](#)).
 - (4) External Wound Location Chart ([OPD Form 3](#)).
 - g. Forward all reports to the Canine Unit Sergeant
 - (1) The Canine Unit Sergeant will be responsible for reviewing the use of force, completing the "Supervisor" section of the Chief's Report, and completing the overall synopsis determining whether the bite was a reasonable use of force.
 - (2) The Canine Unit Sergeant will forward the required reports to the Safety Review Committee via chain of command.

B. Interviewing Witnesses, Suspects, and Officers.

1. When interviewing witnesses to the canine use of force incident, the investigating sergeant will ask the following questions when appropriate.
 - a. What was the nature of the original call?
 - b. What was the suspect wanted for?
 - c. What is the history of the suspect?
 - d. Did the suspect pose a danger to officers or to others?
 - e. Were announcements made prior to the canine deployment? If so, how many announcements were made?
 - f. If no announcements were made, was there a tactical or safety reason not to give them?
 - g. If announcements were made, could the suspect hear and understand them clearly?
 - h. Were there other witnesses in the vicinity of the announcements?
 - i. Were the announcements given in a location where the suspect should have heard them?
 - j. Did the officer appear to see the apprehension? If so, how long was the canine on the bite prior to being removed by the canine officer?
 - k. Did the suspect make any statements to the officer(s) acknowledging their failure to surrender or comply?

2. When interviewing suspects who were subjected to a canine use of force, inform them the intent of the questioning is only to investigate the use of the canine, and that nothing they say will be used in a criminal investigation.
 - a. If the suspect will face felony charges, or it is anticipated that the Criminal Investigations Bureau (CIB) will question the suspect, DO NOT question the suspect.
 - b. If the suspect will face misdemeanor charges only, and/or CIB interviews are not anticipated, the investigating sergeant may question the suspect.
 - c. When interviewing the suspect/subject on the canine use of force incident, the investigating sergeant will ask the following questions:
 - (1) Is the suspect under the influence of any alcohol or drugs?
 - (2) Did the suspect hear any announcements to speak up or surrender, or a dog would be deployed?
 - (3) If the suspect did hear announcements, did they follow the instructions? If not, why not?
 - (4) Where on the body was the suspect bitten? Are there any other wounds?

NOTE: The investigating sergeant should observe the wound(s).

- (5) Is the suspect in pain?
- (6) What did the canine do when the suspect was found?
- (7) Did the suspect attempt to flee, strike, kick, or make sudden movements to avoid being bitten?
- (8) How long was the dog on the bite?
- (9) Is there anything the suspect could have done to avoid being bitten?

V. Public Appearances:

- A. The OPD has received requests from members of civic organizations requesting that canines be allowed to make public appearances and give demonstrations.
- B. These requests will be reviewed, and the decision to allow canines to be used during a presentation or public appearance will be at the discretion of the Canine Unit Sergeant.

REFERENCES:

I. Previous OPD Orders

- A. Previous OPD General Orders include the following: #32-89, 34-90, 52-96, 30-03, 25-07, 31-11, 34-14, 9-16, and 26-20.

II. CALEA Accreditation Standards

- A. Relevant CALEA Accreditation Standards include the following: 1.3.6 and 41.1.4.

III. Other

- A. PPM Monthly Update #6-2015, #6-2018, and #9-2019