

**Blaine County Sheriff Search and Rescue K-9 Unit
Avalanche
Certification Standards**

Purpose:

To participate in a professional volunteer program involving Emergency Rescue Services for the public in a snow and avalanche context.

Policy:

Prior to being evaluated and approved as a field ready team, each individual must have fulfilled the necessary requirements as deemed by the Blaine County Sheriff Search and Rescue K-9 Unit Standard Operating Guidelines.

Levels of Certification:

Fulfilling the standards listed will qualify the team as a Level I or Level II for Avalanche Search in Blaine County Search and Rescue. If a team has passed the NASAR Canine SARTECH certification for Avalanche, they will automatically qualify for Level I for Blaine County Search and Rescue.

Level I – Advanced Search Test:

Multiple subjects plus clothing articles buried out of sight of test team in moderate depth snow, (3-6 feet), for maximum of ten minutes, (average density snow), in a simulated avalanche site at least 100 yards top to bottom and 100 yards across.

The Handler and dog must approach and navigate rapidly and carefully despite radio interruptions and people in the area. They need not locate the clothing articles.

The team must find all the live victims in the allotted time of 20 minutes. Finding only 1 victim does not qualify for a Level II rating.

Prior to testing, the handler should be able to describe to evaluators the body language their dog will display when signaling a “FIND”.

Level II – Basic Search Test:

Subject buried out of test teams sight in moderate depth snow, (3-6 feet), for maximum of ten minutes, (average density snow, extremely dense snow necessitates slightly longer scent rise time), in a simulated avalanche deposition zone at least 100 yards square. Handler and dog must approach and navigate rapidly and carefully, locating subject within twenty (20) minutes with strong indication and enthusiastic digging.

Level II testing is not a required “stepping stone”, a team may elect to test for Level I without having tested for Level II, if the Handler feels they are ready.

Standards for Evaluation:

- There will be one or more evaluator(s). At least one of the evaluators must be independent of BCSAR K 9 Unit.
- Selection of evaluator(s) shall be by agreement of the BCSAR K-9 Unit Commander and Sheriff’s Office BCSAR Commander.

- All evaluator(s) are answerable to the BCSAR K-9 Unit and may be dismissed by same. However, all test results are final and may not be reversed by BCSAR K-9 Unit.
- Evaluator(s) will use the BCSAR K-9 Unit Avalanche Certification Score Sheet.
- All teams testing will be given fair and equal test situations. Teams will not test on the same day on a previously used site.
- No team with a female dog in heat will be allowed to test with other teams present.
- Any protest of the test scenario must be presented and considered prior to the test, e.g. presence of smoke, fuel or female dog in heat cycle.
- A certified team must re-test every 3 years to maintain certification.

General Format – Test Site:

- Test area shall be at least 100 yards square.
- Entire test area shall be disturbed, even if natural deposition zone is used. This is to prevent localization of scent only around burial holes.
- Burial of victim shall be in a manner which will leave no visual clues for the testing team. Area disturbance must be uniform.
- No article belonging to the testing teams will be allowed in the hole.
- Victims must be unknown to the dog of the testing team.
- To prevent tracking, “victims and shovelers” will enter from above the test site and from the windward side if possible.
- Shovelers, evaluators, and ski equipment shall be placed in a manner that will not cue the testing team.
- Site preparation and digging holes should be done at least a day in advance of the test to minimize the residual scent at the burial sites.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS FOR LIVE BURIALS:

- Victim(s) must have a radio. Radio contact will be verified prior to the entrance of the cave being covered by snow.
- Victim(s) location must be marked and watched by an observer/shoveler at all times but placed in such a way as to not clue the team to the victim's whereabouts.
- Holes must be constructed with an adequate air space, and large enough for free movement of victim.
- Victim(s) must have a transceiver, which will be on.
- The victim(s) may request extrication at any time and will be dug up immediately.
- Victim(s) should be dressed appropriately to be comfortable under the snow for up to 1/2 hour.

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