



# Mountain Canine Corps New Member Information



## Mountain Canine Corps New Member Information

Please read this first if you are thinking of joining us!

### *a) What we do*

Mountain Canine Corps (MCC or MC<sup>2</sup>) is a search and rescue (SAR) team that is recognized by the State of New Mexico and is a member of the New Mexico Search and Rescue Council. Our mission is the training and fielding of search dogs and people to participate in searches for lost persons. Like all SAR teams in New Mexico, the team is composed of volunteers who dedicate a significant amount of time to training and participating in searches. SAR is extremely rewarding but requires a large commitment from those who wish to be fielded for searches.

The purpose of this section is to describe what we do and what will be asked of you if you would like to join the team.

The team is composed of dog handlers, support specialists, people who support SAR operations and people who assist with the training of dogs without participating in searches. The majority of team members participate as either dog handlers or support specialists. Unlike police or military dogs, our dogs are family pets.

If you would like to participate in SAR with MCC as a dog handler or support specialist, please read the following information. Training and participating in SAR requires significant time, expense and a very high level of physical fitness.

The following is not meant to scare away potential members. Rather, it is intended to prepare potential members for the amount of effort that is necessary to be fielded for searches.

### *b) Time*

We are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Searches are typically in the middle of the night and can (and do) occur any day including Thanksgiving and Christmas. Searches typically consume 10 hours or more, depending on the drive involved. The team expects its members to participate in searches when possible. The team also expects members to act as callout officer (being available at all times via cell phone) for a one week period every few months.

We devote 4 to 5 hours per week for training (Thursday evenings and Sunday mornings). If you wish to train a search dog, it will probably take at least a year and a half before you are offered a mission readiness examination. The majority of the handler / dog teams that make it past the initial screening and begin training do not achieve proficiency such that they are offered a mission readiness exam.

Training in other SAR skills is expected and can be time consuming. Members wishing to participate in searches must pass the NM Field certification exam and are encouraged to obtain a ham radio license. Almost all members have some form of wilderness medicine training and some are licensed first responders or EMTs. Dog handlers also train in canine first aid. Members often participate in community outreach demonstrations for scouts or other groups.

### *c) Expense*

Although the team has a limited supply of equipment that can be borrowed, members are expected to supply their own equipment necessary for searches. It is expensive to outfit yourself.



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Most notably, radios, GPS, backpacks, breathable waterproof clothing, and snowshoes can each cost hundreds of dollars. An off-road-capable vehicle is extremely useful for dog handlers (who are usually the ones driving to missions).

### *d) Physical fitness*

MCC has no formal physical fitness test. However, a very high level of physical fitness is necessary to participate in searches. The MCC Board will not permit you to participate in searches if there is any doubt about your ability to hike long distances with a heavy pack at high altitudes in adverse weather conditions. Searches may involve hiking all night, for 10 or more miles. Most searches involves hikes with thousands of feet of ascent and descent. Searches usually take place in the mountains between 8,000 and 12,000 feet, and occasionally at higher altitude. Winter and spring searches usually require hiking with snowshoes. Some searches involve expending more energy than is required to complete a marathon. As a guideline, many MCC members are competitive runners, bicyclists and tri-athletes. Finally, if you choose to train a dog, your dog must be in excellent condition.

### *e) Dogs*

While MCC does not limit any dog breeds from candidacy, there are traits that limit many breeds from participating in SAR. The most important trait is the dog's drive. Because a dog may be asked to search for 8 or more hours, it needs to have very high prey / play drive in order to be a good search dog. Other important traits are size, physical stamina, interest in strangers, cold weather tolerance, age and trainability (including excellent recall). Note that sense of smell is not on the list! Although some breeds have a better sense of smell, all dogs have the ability to track or air scent. In short, we are looking for dogs capable of hiking long distances that want to find people such that they will work all night even without finding a subject. The list of traits above generally limits candidates to working breeds, specifically retrievers, herding dogs, hounds and mixed breeds derived from these breeds.

Following attendance at 10 practices, a person wishing to train a dog will need to have the dog screened for its natural drive. The dog will only be allowed to train with the team if it is can pass the initial screening. Note that at least half of the dogs we screen do not pass the initial screening. After a few months of training, the dog will be re-evaluated to see whether it will make a good SAR dog. Ultimately, a mission readiness examination may not be offered even if the dog appears suitable early in its training. Only a small fraction of dogs that are screened by MCC ultimately become mission ready.

### *f) How can I help if I do not have the ability to participate in searches?*

MCC can still use your help even if you are unable to participate in searches. We have members who help us train dogs. We have members who participate as part of the incident command structure during searches. We also have members who serve as callout officer, making themselves available by cell phone or pager 24 hours a day for a week at a time. Still further, non-fielded members can help us with community outreach events. So there are lots of opportunities to volunteer!



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## Mountain Canine Corps New Member Information

### 1) Introduction

Mountain Canine Corps (MCC or MC<sup>2</sup>) is a search and rescue (SAR) team that is recognized by the State of New Mexico and that is a member of the New Mexico Search and Rescue Council (NMSARC). Our mission is the training and fielding of search dogs to help locate missing persons. The training process includes the education of handlers and support specialists in (1) search dog behavior and capabilities and (2) search and rescue procedures and practices.

For membership guidelines, see MCC bylaws (<http://mc2sar.org/about-us/bylaws>). Attachment 1 is a membership application.

MCC team members have three basic responsibilities:

- to make sure that they and, if applicable, their dog, have the level of training, both in skills and physical fitness, necessary to participate on searches and to participate on searches as often as they can,
- to assist team members with their training, and
- to acquire and maintain the equipment necessary to participate in team training and on searches.

On a search, it is most important to do no harm. Significant training is necessary to avoid becoming part of the problem on a search. The most notable skills necessary include map & compass and GPS usage, wilderness medicine (including canine first aid for dog handlers) and ham radio operation. Carrying adequate supplies & equipment and maintaining physical fitness are also critical to avoid becoming a problem on a search.

There are a lot of ways to support MCC and NM SAR. The most typical roles are discussed below.

#### *a) Member specialty - support specialist*

Although the team's emphasis is on search dogs, the team has more support specialists than dog handlers. This is necessary because search teams ideally have several support specialists for each dog / handler team. Support specialists are responsible for communication, navigation, carrying equipment, offering search strategy and other critical support functions. When fielded, support specialists generally support MCC dog handlers but may support other dog or groundpounder teams if necessary. Also, dog handlers may be fielded without their dogs if their dogs' specialty is not needed (e.g., live find dog on a human remains search) or in the winter and spring when the snowpack is too deep for dogs to hike any distance.

#### *b) Member specialty - dog handler*

MCC trains three types of search dogs - tracking / trailing, air scent and human remains. Tracking dogs are trained to follow the path where the subject has travelled. Air scent dogs are trained to work a wide area searching for the subject's air scent. Human remains detection dogs are trained to find human remains. A specific dog and handler become mission ready as a team - a dog may only be handled by more than one person if all handlers pass a separate mission readiness examination with the dog. This instance is rare. Information on the mission readiness evaluations for the different types of specialty are available on our website (<http://mc2sar.org/>).



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MCC starts teams as live-find dog teams, usually as tracking dog teams. Adjustments are made based on the dog's search style. Human remains detection may be added later in training. Although finding human remains is essential for family closure and criminal work, MCC's emphasis is on training live-find dogs. The motto of search and rescue is "so that others may live". That is the motto of MCC also and finding live subjects is our most essential benefit to the community.

### *c) Member specialty - canine members*

Like all of the human team members, search and rescue dogs should be healthy, fit, and have a good, stable temperament. The dogs should be energetic and have an excellent play / prey / working drive. Dogs may start their training at any age, however, training begun when the dogs are six months to two years of age is ideal. Minimal protective aggression towards other dogs can be managed if the handler is prepared to deal with it properly. Dogs must be affable towards strangers and unprovoked aggression towards people is absolutely unacceptable. SAR dogs are not required to be spayed / neutered but it is often considered beneficial in terms of minimizing distractions and aggression.

Just as support specialists support a dog team, dog handlers are there to support their dogs. Handlers and support specialists carry all necessary food, water and supplies. This allows the dogs to work / hike / climb more easily as well as avoiding entanglements.

This and other useful information can be found on our website at <http://www.mc2sar.org>.

## 2) Membership

Membership policies are detailed in the MCC Bylaws (<http://mc2sar.org/about-us/bylaws>) and [Attachment 2](#), Mountain Canine Corps New Member Policy.

## 3) Training

### *a) Team Training*

Team training is scheduled two months at a time. The schedule is set and coordinators are assigned at the bimonthly team meeting or via e-mail. Team training sessions are scheduled twice a week, one on Thursday evening and one on Sunday morning. The Thursday session typically lasts 60 to 90 minutes and consists of relatively short tracks or short problem-solving exercises. Sunday sessions may last two hours or more. Handlers are also expected to act as practice coordinators (where their dogs are left at home) at least once during each two-month training period. In addition, handlers, especially with beginning dogs, are encouraged to do additional search training with their dogs, either with friends and family members or in one-on-one sessions with team members. Handlers are generally expected to work their dogs and also to assist as a subject or an observer.

All team members are expected to become knowledgeable in the following areas: navigation (map and compass, GPS), radio communications, clothing and equipment requirements, NM



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State search policy and organization (Incident Command System), search strategy (subject profiles, weather and terrain considerations, probability of detection, etc.), and first aid. All team members must pass the NM State SAR Field Certification exam to be fielded by MCC. Team members must be able to read topographic maps, to take bearings, and to estimate distances, determine feasible routes, and time needed to travel between points. Dog handlers may also find it beneficial to learn mantracking, canine first aid, and canine search strategy (winds, heating, scent pools, etc.). Many of these skills can be learned at regular team practices, from special team training sessions, and from one-on-one sessions with mentors. SAR seminars in NM and around the country also offer training in many of these areas. Team members are strongly encouraged to become certified in wilderness medicine and most team members are Wilderness First Responder (WFRs) or Wilderness First Aid (WFA) trained. The team also has a SAR library with many useful books as shown in the accompanying bibliography (see [Attachment 7](#)).

Excellent physical fitness is necessary to participate in searches. MCC does not have a formal physical fitness test but the MCC Board will not allow a member to participate in searches unless the Board is sure of a member's ability to handle searching at high altitudes for long distances and durations with a heavy pack. The MCC Board may use team hikes in addition to practices to evaluate fitness of members.

### *b) Canine Training*

Search dogs should be obedience trained and must be under handler control at all times. Dogs should also be on a short leash or in a vehicle except when working or when playing after the training session is finished. Dogs participating in public outreach or attending seminars and conferences must remain calm and not show any dog-aggressive behavior. Search dogs are expected to be able to work in a variety of conditions and are expected to have a variety of skills that may be required on searches. Tracking / trailing dogs should be able to determine direction of travel from a contaminated area, to locate the correct track (perimeter search), to discriminate between the subject's track and other tracks (scent discrimination), and to work through various scent problems, including scent pools and scent "vacuums". Air scent dogs must be trained in agility, directability, and working scent in a variety of wind conditions. All search dogs must also give a clear, readable alert, even under stressful circumstances. All dogs, regardless of whether they specialize in tracking, airscent or human remains detection must have excellent recall. Recall is necessary even for our tracking dogs since they may work off-lead as a result of the search terrain and duration.

All search dogs require a variety of skills for which we do not explicitly test. For example, scent-specific dogs need to learn to take scent from contaminated objects, fresh footprints, car seats, the outside of vehicles, etc. Directability including "over", "under", etc. is also necessary.

In the introductory period, prospective dog handlers are requested not to train their dogs. This period is reserved for learning how experienced dog and handler teams work, and observing this process is extremely beneficial. The introductory period is typically concluded following attendance at 10 practices.

For more information on training see [Attachment 3. Mountain Canine Corps Suggestions for Tracklayers](#), [Attachment 4. Mountain Canine Corps Training Guidelines for SAR Dog and Handler](#) and [Attachment 5. Mountain Canine Corps Mentor Guidelines](#).





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### 4) Equipment

For a complete description of required and recommended gear, see [Attachment 6](#) for equipment specific to dogs, and the New Mexico Search and Rescue Council web site field certification guide (<http://www.nmesrc.org/resources/certification.html>) for gear necessary for people. A brief discussion is also below.

#### *a) Clothing*

Team members are expected to come prepared for whatever weather, terrain, and vegetation that they might encounter. Weather changes very rapidly and wearing / carrying layers is essential for preparedness.

For practice sessions, shorts, sneakers and jeans are permitted if they are suitable for the conditions. It is always wise to have rain gear on hand. Gloves are helpful for preventing rope burns from the tracking lead and for protection against thorns, barbed wire, and other sharp objects. Lightweight gardening gloves, leather work gloves or biking gloves are fine in warm weather. For cold or snowy weather, a polar fleece liner with waterproof shell works well.

For searches, clothing for the worst conditions is necessary. Freezing conditions / snow may occur at the highest altitudes any time of the year and preparation for those conditions is necessary. Clothing that provides insulation when wet (silk, wool, polar fleece and other appropriate synthetics are fine, cotton is unacceptable) is required. Long pants and sturdy hiking boots are required so that you are prepared for a variety of conditions and to present a professional appearance. You should pack additional warm clothing for yourself and for a found hypothermic subject. In addition, a hard hat or climbing helmet and headlamp may be included with your search gear.

#### *b) Packs*

For practice, a medium-sized fanny pack, with side holsters for water bottles, or a Camelbak work well. Besides water, contents of the fanny pack generally include gloves, dog treats and / or toys, and a light rain jacket.

For most searches, a sturdy medium-sized pack is necessary and should include the following items: extra batteries, extra warm clothing including rain gear, first aid kit (including antihistamines for bites and stings, and tweezers for thorn removal), matches or lighter, headlamp, trash bags, multi-tool, flagging tape, food and water. It is a good idea to package all gear in Ziploc type plastic bags to protect items from rain and from leakage. For searches in very remote areas, a larger pack with sleeping bag and tent or bivy sack may be needed.

#### *c) Communication and navigation*

For safety reasons, all team members are required to have a functioning radio for both practices and searches. For searches, all team members must have a radio that operates on the team frequency (155.205 MHz) and the NM State SAR frequency (155.160 MHz). Most team members own their own radios, and a few team-owned radios are available for loan to members. For searches, some additional radios are available at CD-1 from Los Alamos Civil Defense and





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SAR. Radio harnesses are very useful for hands-free radio operation, and for holding small items like compass, whistle, and extra batteries. All team members should have a compass and whistle with them at all times.

### *d) Miscellaneous*

On searches, you should have sunscreen, lip balm, and bug repellent with you at all times. It is a good idea to have a space blanket in your pack in case you need to warm yourself or the subject. Dog handlers will of course have a tracking harness (made of nylon webbing or leather) and a tracking lead (20 to 30 feet long, made of cotton or nylon webbing). Air scent dog handlers should have a puffer bottle or other means of determining wind conditions. For night practices and searches, dog handlers should have an illuminated dog collar, bicycle flashers, or cyalume sticks to make their dogs visible in the dark.

## 5) Search Callouts

When a person is reported missing to the New Mexico State Police (NMSP), the NMSP will determine if a search is required. The NMSP will appoint an officer as mission initiator. The mission initiator will, if warranted, appoint a volunteer incident commander (IC). The IC will, in turn, contact volunteer teams for callout when requests are received. MCC will call out certified dog teams and mission ready support specialists following a request from the IC. The MCC callout officer is responsible for communication between team members and the IC.

MCC callouts proceed as follows:

- A group page is issued and the callout officer leaves a message on the CD-1 line with details regarding the search.
- Members who do not respond but who wish to be contacted are called.
- Team members who can respond to the search notify the callout person to receive information about the subject and search. Important information includes incident base location, radio frequencies to be used, maps needed for the search, phone numbers to call, weather and terrain conditions, etc.
- The callout officer coordinates teaming / carpooling of dog handlers with support specialists when possible.
- The callout officer responds to the IC with the number and types of MCC responders along with their estimated time of arrival.
- The callout officer keeps a record of responders and is responsible for tracking their return home from the field. If the search ends when team members are in transit, the callout officer notifies the responders that they should return home.
- When the mission ends, a group page is issued.

Searches progress as follows:



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- The responding teams sign in at incident base. and receive an assignment. MCC or other team support persons will be assigned to an MCC dog team.
- Dogs are kept away from incident base activities until they are ready to begin working.
- Members follow their assignments. Members may refuse or negotiate an assignment that they feel that they cannot accomplish. Deviation from an assignment should only occur with consent from incident base. Each person in the field is responsible for the safety of themselves, their teammates, the dog and the subject and must search with "safety first" in mind.
- Members return to incident base when their assignment is complete or when the team is recalled. Members must sign out prior to leaving incident base.

Dogs that are not mission ready are not allowed in the field regardless of the IC's request. Searchers never go out in the field alone. Dog handler teams are accompanied by support specialists, either from MCC or other recognized teams.

A member's first three missions must be with other experienced MCC members.

MCC may be called out any time day or night in any weather. Live-find searches typically occur at night after a person does not return home. Night searches involve increased risk in the field and especially on the drive home. Cadaver / human remains searches usually occur during the day when a rapid response is unnecessary. Occasionally callouts will be focused (e.g., no dogs, air scent dogs only, cadaver dogs only) based on requests from the IC. [Attachment 8](#) describes "typical" search scenarios.

Team members are volunteers and are not required to respond, but should respond as their fitness, training, work and family responsibilities allow. However, dog handlers in particular are strongly encouraged to respond.

### 6) Mission Report Confidentiality (Approved March, 2003)

- Mission reports are written in an open and honest manner.
- The author of a mission report will be the report's sole distributor. The intended recipients of a mission report are at the sole discretion of the author of the report. For example, an author might decide only to send their report to the Board or the people that attended the search.
- Because of the valuable learning nature of mission reports, authors are encouraged to share them as widely as possible within MCC.
- MCC recognizes that we are part of the larger SAR community and strives to improve SAR competency whenever possible. Information from reports that would be beneficial outside of MCC will only be shared when:
  - 1) The author is asked permission and informed of the exact portion of the mission report that will be shared, the recipients, and the context in which the information will be used.



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- 2) Permission of the author is explicitly obtained. The author has the right to deny permission.
  - 3) A statement is made to the recipients that the information is not to be distributed further.
- Authors of mission reports with information the author deems potentially sensitive for the subject are encouraged to clearly label the report "Confidential" and write a statement to remind report recipients to not discuss or distribute the information beyond the original distribution.
  - Because of the inherent risk of open email being distributed, authors should not send any potentially damaging information / pictures over e-mail. For example, pictures of a deceased subject scene should not be sent over open e-mail.



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### Attachment 1. Application for Mountain Canine Corps Membership

MCC is a Search and Rescue dog team of unpaid volunteers recognized by the state of New Mexico. Procedures for obtaining full mission readiness status are described in the Constitution and Bylaws.

If you wish to apply for membership, you will need two members of MCC to sponsor you, at least one of whom must be (or have been) a mission ready dog handler.

Please answer the following questions:

- 1) We practice about 10 times per month. How many practices do you plan to attend? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) New handlers may need to practice more frequently than scheduled MCC practices. Are you willing to train with your dog outside regular team sessions? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Do you have or are you willing to obtain all the required equipment (see NMSARC web site, field certification guide (<http://www.nmesrc.org/resources/certification.html>)) and see Attachment 6 for potential dog handlers)? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Are you willing to help other team members with their training and to serve as practice coordinator as required? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) Would you be willing to accompany a dog and handler team on a mission as a support specialist (without your dog) before you and your dog are mission ready? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) When you and your dog are mission ready, at what times and under what conditions would you be willing to respond on a mission? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) What is your ultimate goal in joining MCC (e.g. support specialist, wilderness SAR dog handler, field coordinator, team member not participating in searches)?  
\_\_\_\_\_

I, the undersigned hereby apply for membership in the MCC. In consideration of the instruction I will receive and the opportunity to participate in the regular training sessions of MCC ,I hereby agree to release and hold harmless the officers and other members of MCC from any liability for injury to myself or my dog incurred as a result of my participation. In addition should MCC loan any equipment to me, I agree to return such equipment to MCC upon request.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell/pager: \_\_\_\_\_

Dog's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Breed: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor #1: Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor #2: Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Mountain Canine Corps New Member Information

### Attachment 2. Mountain Canine Corps New Member Policy (Revised February 2004)

This is an outline of the process for intake of new members onto MCC. The process is designed to be beneficial to your needs and those of the Team.

- 1) Potential new member observes Team practices for a few weeks to see what MCC does, and to determine if she / he is truly interested in joining the Team. During this period, the potential new member should review the MCC New Member Information to develop an understanding of what is expected of an MCC member.
- 2) If interested, the potential new member solicits two current members to sign his / her application form ([Attachment 1](#)).
- 3) Application and yearly dues are submitted to the Board. The Board will hold this application and not act on it until they form an opinion about the applicant's suitability for SAR, their real interest, and their compatibility with the team. The applicant is required to attend at least 10 practices during the first two-month period.
- 4) After the applicant has attended 10 initial practices, the Board will vote on the application. If approved, the applicant becomes a provisional member. Attainment of provisional member status does not guarantee that a member's dog will be accepted for canine training. Details of provisional and full membership are given in the MCC Bylaws (see <http://mc2sar.org>).
- 5) From the time an applicant submits her / his membership application, she / he will study and practice skills necessary for SAR proficiency, such as navigation, communications, first aid, wilderness skills, fitness, etc (see [Attachment 4](#)), and participate in MCC practices and activities. Training in many of these areas will be provided by MCC. Following attendance at 10 practices, a new member's dog will be evaluated by the evaluation committee to determine the dog's suitability for SAR work. The dog may not attend team practices until it is evaluated. Abilities and a willingness to continue learning in these areas will be taken into consideration when voting upon provisional member status and in determining which dog / handler teams will be taken on for canine training.
- 6) For those who are joining the team as support specialists (have no intention of training a dog), the guidelines are modified. After the evaluation period, the Board will vote on whether or not to accept the applicant as a provisional member.
- 7) There are no specific timelines, but full member status is typically not granted for at least 6 months from the time that provisional status is attained. Input from the team is considered when the Board votes on provisional and full status.
- 8) In order to streamline the training process, training of new handlers' dogs will be initiated at times designated by the Board. The board's decision will be communicated to the new member based on current and projected need for new dogs, availability of mentors, and other training considerations.



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### Attachment 3. Mountain Canine Corps Suggestions for Tracklayers

Practice tracks are usually 5 to 30 minutes long. Tracks are usually marked with "flags", generally trail tape. The tape can be tied directly to trees and bushes. However, it is preferable if the tape is attached to clothespins for easy removal and reuse. Team members are encouraged to mark the tape with their initials or other identifying mark. It is also often helpful for beginning handlers if the flags are placed very closely so that the handler can easily see from flag to flag. Aged tracks may be set using a GPS and the GPS given to the dog handler prior to running the track. "Blind" tracks should not be run until the handler / dog team has significant experience.

Scent articles should also be used on the track, especially for beginning dogs. The scent articles reinforce the dog for tracking correctly, and give the handler an opportunity to reward the dog, which is especially helpful on long difficult tracks. The scent articles should also have identifying marks and possibly numbers. One easy way for new members to acquire scent articles is to purchase a number of socks at a thrift shop, take them home and launder them, scent them (preferably by tucking them inside your clothing rather than by wearing them), and then storing them in a clean Ziploc-loc type plastic bag. For use with beginning dogs, scent articles should be laundered after each use.

When laying tracks, tracklayers should keep the following in mind:

- 1) the training status of the dog / handler team (beginner, intermediate, advanced)
- 2) the weather (temperature, moisture, wind)
- 3) terrain difficulty
- 4) age of the track when it will be run

Tracklayers may also be asked to set tracks that incorporate certain problems for the dog team to solve. These may include:

- 1) cutting the track / perimeter search / direction of travel
- 2) scent discrimination
- 3) cross tracks
- 4) scent pools

The practice coordinator will generally provide the tracklayer with specific instructions concerning location, length, degree of difficulty, and any special problems to be included, as requested by the handler or mentor.

The tracklayer should take care not to set a track that can easily be "shortcut" by the dog. In order to avoid this, the tracklayer should not have sections between turns that are too close together or that cross each other (unless this is the purpose of the exercise). If there are any hazards that the dog team is likely to encounter in the course of running the track (e.g., coyotes, vehicle traffic), the tracklayer should inform the handler of these before the handler begins running the track. In addition, the tracklayer should be aware of other tracks that may have been set or will be set in the vicinity. The tracklayer should be positioned where communication with the practice coordinator is adequate.



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### Attachment 4. Mountain Canine Corps Training Guidelines for SAR Dog and Handler

Resources for training are available from a number of sources, including SAR workshops put on by the New Mexico Search and Rescue Council and other organizations, from numerous books, including those in the MCC library, and from the web pages of MCC and other SAR organizations.

#### a) Handler Training

- 1) Map and compass (NMSARC and other seminars, many books)
- 2) Equipment / clothing for SAR (e.g., Field Certification Study Guide)
- 3) Communications
- 4) Wilderness First Aid / CPR
- 5) Man tracking (NMSARC, NASAR classes)
- 6) Search organization (e.g., Incident Command Structure)
- 7) Dog training theory (e.g., Don't Shoot the Dog, Karen Pryor)
- 8) Scene Preservation (NMSARC and other seminars)
- 9) Scent Theory (e.g., Sandy Bryson's book)

#### b) Dog Training

For early dog training, the handler should know the solution to the problem. The purpose of these exercises is to help the dog gain experience and confidence, and for the handler to learn to read the dog as it attempts to solve these problems.

- 1) Scent discrimination / cross tracks (MCC web page - <http://mc2sar.org>)
- 2) Perimeter search (MCC web page - <http://mc2sar.org>)
- 3) Direction-of-travel determination (tracking / trailing dogs only)
- 4) Article search (e.g., articles in trees, buried articles, etc.)
- 5) Alerts / re-find (non-responsive / concealed / inaccessible subjects, multiple subjects, moving subjects, etc.)
- 6) Scent problems (scent pools, cliffs, drainages, mesa tops, contamination, etc.)
- 7) Mental focus and stamina (distractions, older tracks, longer tracks up to 40 minutes)

#### c) Testing / Proofing / Reading your dog

Similar exercises to the ones listed above, but now the handler does not know the solution. The dog needs to be able to solve the problem, and the handler needs to be able to read the dog well enough to know whether the dog has solved the problem correctly. Once all of these components are in place, the dog and handler are ready for the MRE.

#### d) Training sequence

- 1) Initially, all exercises should be training exercises, i.e., the handler knows the answer.





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- 2) After about 3-4 months of training, about 1 in 4 exercises should be for handler proofing / reading the dog.
- 3) After about 6 months, the handler should request a proofing test, which will consist of a short MRE-type exercise. A fifteen minute, 4-8 hour old track or a 10 acre, one hour limit air scent problem is suggested.
- 4) After about 9-12 months, the handler should request a "mini-MRE", a 30 minute track aged overnight, or a 70-acre, 90-minute limit air-scent problem.
- 5) Further training with longer exercises of at least 45 minutes occurs.
- 6) After this has been successfully completed (about 18 months of training), the handler, with the mentor's approval, should request an MRE. See [Attachment 5](#).

If training is not progressing satisfactorily or in a timely manner, the handler and mentor should talk to the Board about improving the quality and quantity of her / his training or alternatively, request a leave of absence until they can devote the necessary effort to training.



## Mountain Canine Corps New Member Information

### Attachment 5. Mountain Canine Corps Mentor Guidelines

Qualifications: The mentor must be a member in good standing of MCC and must be either a dog handler who has trained a mission ready dog, or a support specialist who has participated in search missions. The MCC Board will assign members who have agreed to be mentors to all trainees, both prospective support specialists and dog handlers, as needed. New dog handler members with adult dogs will be assigned a mentor as soon as possible, new dog handler members with puppies will be assigned a mentor as appropriate.

Responsibilities:

- 1) Initial meeting. The mentor will meet with the trainee to discuss the trainee's goals and to put together an initial training plan.
- 2) Regular training. At each practice session where both mentor and trainee are present, the mentor should act as an observer or recruit a substitute observer and talk to the substitute about their observations. The mentor should provide feedback from tracklayers and observers to the trainee.
- 3) Supplemental training. For the first three months of the mentoring assignment, the mentor should endeavor to work once a week with the trainee outside of regular team practices. This assistance could take the form of setting up an exercise (tracking or air scent problem) or acting as an observer, or meeting to discuss training progress and issues. During the second half of the mentoring assignment, the mentor should encourage the trainee to work with other team members on a one-on-one basis but should check in with the trainee at least biweekly to monitor progress.
- 4) Preparation for mission readiness examination: The mentor and handler should meet with the Board to discuss the dog team's candidacy for the mission readiness examination.



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### Attachment 6. SAR Equipment for Dogs

#### REQUIRED

- at least one food ration
- at least 2 quarts of water
- collar & leash
- restraint system
- cylume nightstick / flashers / lighted collar / reflective vest
- cowbell or other noise maker to hear the dog's position if it works off-lead at night
- medication if needed

#### OPTIONAL

- goggles (helicopter transport)
- cotton balls for ears (helicopter transport)
- dishes (food and water)
- sling orange vest
- treats
- rabies, vaccination / health record copies (have in car)
- booties
- thermometer
- first aid kit (prescription drugs, Benadryl, moleskin, Band-Aids, roll gauze, 2" wide, roll tape, scissors, safety pins, 2x2 gauze pads, eye drops, ophthalmic ointment (dog), antiseptic, alcohol pads, antibiotic ointment, needle, tweezers, pain killers, sting ease, chemical hot, cold packs, Sam splint materials)



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### Attachment 7. Relevant Search and Rescue Publications

- Tracking for Search and Rescue Dogs, Boguslaw Gorny, Detselig Enterprises, 2003
- Practical Scent Dog Training, Lue Button, Alpine Publications 1990
- Ready! The Training of the Search and Rescue Dog, Susan Bulanda, Doral Publishing 1994.
- Scent and The Scenting Dog, William G. Syrotuck, Barkleigh Productions, 2000
- Tracking Dog, Theory and Methods, Glen Johnson, Arner Publications, 1975
- Following Ghosts: Developing the tracking relationship, John Rice, Flying Dog Press, 1996
- An Introduction to Land Search Probabilities and Calculations, William C Syrotuck, Arner Publications, 1975
- K-9 Suspect Discrimination, Andee Schoon and Ruud Haak, Detselig Enterprises, 2002
- American Search and Rescue Association Seminar, Wiggins, Mississippi, 1994 (Ethics for SAR dog handlers, Reinforcements, How to Praise your dog, Agility, Indication of a find of human being, FEMA stuff, Collapse rescue team, Hazards, Locating Buried Victims, Critical Incident Stress Management)
- Cadaver Dog Handbook, Andrew Rebman et al., CRC Press, 2000.
- Search and Rescue Dogs, Training the K-9 Hero, 2nd Edition, American Rescue Dog Association, Wiley Publishing, 2002
- The 60 Second EMT, Rapid BLS / ALS Assessment Diagnosis, and Triage, Gideon Bosker, The C.V. Mosby Company 1988
- Be Expert with Map and Compass, the Orienteering Handbook, Biorn Kjellstrom, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976
- The Basic Essentials of Map and Compass, Cliff Jacobson, ICS Books, 1988
- The Complete Book of Dog Obedience, The Guide for Trainers, Blanche Saunders. Howell Bookhouse, 1978



## Mountain Canine Corps New Member Information

### Attachment 8. Search Scenarios

The following describes some typical wilderness search scenarios. Please bear in mind that typical is a relative term in the area of search and rescue which involves by definition a deviation from the normal way of things. MCC responds to searches all over New Mexico. However, our searches most often occur within a 2-3 hour drive of Los Alamos, including the Las Vegas area, the Pecos Wilderness, the Jemez Mountains, and the Santa Fe area.

Missing persons include overdue hikers, runners, mountain bikers, hunters, and skiers / snowboarders. Other subjects of special concern are children, mentally challenged adults, ill or elderly persons, or persons with Alzheimer's disease. In addition, we may be called to search for potential or actual suicide victims.

Typically, search subjects are considered overdue by friends or family when they do not return to their home, car, or camp at the end of the day. In the case of a healthy adult, the State Police may not be notified until after dark or even the next morning. Often the State Police are called an hour or two after dark. Depending on the danger to the subject (based on the weather and the subject's age, health, clothing and other resources), and potential danger to searchers (darkness, weather, terrain), the State police Mission Initiator (MI) will determine whether to begin a search. If an immediate search is deemed necessary, the MI will contact a volunteer Incident Commander who will in turn see that volunteer resources are activated.

Often the call will go out immediately to volunteer teams. In this case, it is typical to receive calls between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m. Alternatively, we may be called to report to incident base in the morning. Once searchers arrive at incident base, they will sign in, be briefed on the search subject, assigned a team number, and given a search assignment. Search assignments typically take between 2 to 8 hours to complete. Once the assignment has been completed, the search team will report back to incident base, be debriefed, and sign out. If the search has not been concluded and the search team is in good physical condition, the search team may take another assignment.

Typical search assignments include trailing the subject from the point last seen (PLS), trailing from the location of a clue found by other searchers (article, footprint), or determining direction of travel from a parking lot or trail intersection. Trailing dogs may be asked to work trails trying to pick up the track where the subject may have followed or crossed the trail. Air scent dogs are typically asked to work between trails or roads and to clear an area (determine whether the subject is in that area).

After a search, team members are expected to write a brief report of their search activity including total mileage and number of hours and a short summary of their search assignment and its outcome. See [Mission Report Confidentiality](#).

As an example, the following are last 6 searches in which one team member has participated: 1) Lost hiker, incident base at 7,800 feet, 2) Lost snowboarder, 10,400 feet, 3) Lost hunter, 11,400 feet, 4) Lost hiker, 9,800 feet, 5) Lost hiker / downed helicopter, 10,400 feet, 6) Lost child, 5000 feet. The longest distance hiked in any of these searches was 14 miles and longest time in the field was approximately 8 hours.