



Colorado Springs Police Department General Order

435 Canine (K-9) Unit

Section 400 – Tactical Operations

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.01 Purpose

To outline call-out and operational procedures for the Canine (K-9) Unit and to specify conditions binding upon other department personnel.

.02 Cross Reference

[GO 705 Use of Force](#)

[GO 710 Reporting Use of Force](#)

[SOP C1-05 Canine Unit](#)

[SOP AU-31 Explosives Detection Canine Teams](#)

.03 Discussion

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.04 Policy

The K-9 Unit of the Colorado Springs Police Department provides specialized support for general patrol operations. Additionally, the K-9 Unit assists other components of the department, as well as other agencies, upon request. Special procedures in this general order ensure that the advantages offered by the K-9 Unit are obtained with minimal risks to the public, to officers, and to the dogs.

.05 Definitions

Passive Resistance: Physical actions that do not prevent the officer's or marshal's attempt to control, for example, a person who remains in a limp, prone position, or passive demonstrators.

Active Resistance: Physically evasive movements to defeat an officer's or marshal's attempt to control, including, but not limited to, bracing, tensing, pushing, flailing arms, running away, or verbally signaling an intention to avoid or prevent being taken into or retained in custody. Active Resistance also includes attempting to avoid apprehension and failing to comply with an officer's or marshal's order to reveal themselves from concealment or surrender. Walking away may be considered active resistance if the person continues to walk away from an officer or marshal after having been given a lawful order or having been told the person is under arrest. Active Resistance is a higher level of resistance than Passive Resistance.

Active Aggression: A threat or overt act of an assault, coupled with the present ability to carry out the threat or assault, which reasonably indicates that an assault or injury to any person is imminent. Threatening body language includes, but is not limited to, blading the body, assuming a boxer stance, circling officer or marshal's position, clenching of the hands from an open to closed position, forming a fist, etc. Active Aggression is a higher level of resistance than Active Resistance.

Fleeing: Attempting to evade or avoid police contact through flight. Flight may include, but is not limited to, running, as well as, use of a bicycle, skateboard, or other manner of conveyance.

.10 Appropriate Utilization

The K-9 Unit is a support element of the Operations Support Bureau and should be utilized in situations requiring its specialized capabilities. As a guideline for decision-making, it is recognized that police working dogs are effective in the following situations:

- Building searches
 - Handlers will not deploy canines into abandoned buildings unless an officer has reasonable suspicion to believe a crime more serious than trespassing has been committed, or other factors indicate physical resistance is likely.
- Tracking of suspects
- Evidence searches, suspect and fugitive apprehension
 - Handlers will take into consideration the suspect's past criminal history, current charges, and overall risk assessment of the fugitive operation.

.20 Officer Responsibilities

Officers performing duties with, or in the presence of, a police working dog or its handler will abide by the following rules:

- Police working dogs may be deployed to apprehend suspects only after due consideration has been given to the nature of the offense, safety of officers, and safety of the general public. In any case, police working dogs, as an application of force, should only be used

in ways that are objectively reasonable and necessary for performing official law enforcement duties. (Also see section .40)

- Police working dogs may be used to control a crowd only when necessary to prevent death or injury to innocent persons, or to prevent assaults on police officers. Requests for police working dogs for crowd control require the approval of a lieutenant.
- Police working dogs may be used to search for missing persons or lost children only when there are grave extenuating circumstances, such as evidence of foul play or grievous harm. Minimal exceptions to this rule may be granted, by the Tactical Operations Section lieutenant, for the best interest of the department and the public.
- Officers must heed the directions of the K-9 handler when in a tactical situation.
- Police personnel are prohibited from teasing or harassing police working dogs, assigned trainers or handlers in any manner. K-9 Unit personnel are excused from this provision for legitimate training purposes.
- Police personnel may pet police working dogs only with the permission of, and in the presence of, the assigned handler.
- Police personnel must not hug or lean close to the head of a police working dog while petting it.
- Police personnel must not offer food or drink to police working dogs unless permission has been obtained from the assigned handler.
- With the exception of emergencies, or prior approval of any assigned handler, other police personnel must not give commands to police working dogs.

.30 K-9 Unit Responsibilities

In that the K-9 Unit is intended to support all components of the department, the procedures below will be followed by members of the K-9 Unit and, where applicable, all other members of the department.

Arrests made or evidence located, as the result of a request for K-9 assistance, are considered to have been accomplished by the requesting officer. Reports, suspects, and evidence obtained through K-9 assistance will be processed by normal departmental procedures.

Whenever a K-9 unit responds to a request for assistance, the K-9 handler is responsible for completing required supplemental reports, documenting actions taken by the K-9 unit, and turning in evidence seized by the K-9 officer.

All K-9 units are responsible for taking appropriate police action concerning on-view criminal activity and are responsible for completing necessary reports.

Requests for public demonstrations and appearances of K-9 units will be coordinated through the designated unit supervisor and scheduled in accordance with the operational needs of the department. Media requests for K-9 Unit appearances must be coordinated through the department's Public Affairs Office.

.40 Use of Force with Canine

While police canines are a very effective tool in locating and apprehending suspects, the likelihood of serious injury from a police canine contact, compared to some other less lethal tools, is greater. Therefore, not all active resistance meets the “objectively reasonable” standard for a canine deployment. In every situation, it is incumbent upon the canine handler to exercise the appropriate authorization criteria outlined in this GO as well as reasoned discretion before deploying a police canine. As in all use of force actions, the handler is required to articulate how the authorization criteria (or authorized exceptions) were met in the specific circumstances that lead to the use of the police canine. A police canine is an extension of the handler. The actions of the canine are directly related to the training, deployment, actions, and decisions of the handler.

Canine handlers are authorized to deploy a canine as a use of force if:

- Officers have grounds to arrest/detain the person and the person’s actions are at a level of active resistance which poses a risk to officers or others; OR
- Officers have grounds to arrest/detain the person and the person’s actions are at a level of active aggression; or
- The officer reasonably believes the person poses an imminent danger to others.

Often times, as it relates to canine deployments, a single fact may not meet the objective reasonableness standard. The handler must conduct an overall assessment of the totality of the circumstances in determining the objective reasonableness of a canine deployment. The considerations for a handler in determining whether a canine should be used as force mirror those found in [General Order 705.40, Factors to Consider in Use of Force Incidents](#). Canine handlers must pay particular attention to specific considerations, including, but not limited to, the following:

- The subject’s history of violence/resistance, including any past history of the subject being armed with a weapon.
- The subject’s current criminal charges (persons crimes/property crimes, felony/misdemeanor, armed, violent, etc.), including whether the subject is actively involved in a felony crime.
- Whether the subject is in violation of parole conditions.

- Information surrounding the subject's mental state and/or likelihood of violent resistance and/or threat to the public.
- The subject's failure to comply with officers' orders to surrender.
- Information and/or observations indicating a likelihood of violent resistance or danger to the public.
- The subject's present ability to resist or present a danger to others.

In that it is less-lethal in nature, the use of a canine to prevent flight of an offender is an option if the safety of the public, or the safety of the officers pursuing is jeopardized and can be articulated using the facts known at the time.

Prior to an off-lead building search or an off-lead field search, an audible canine warning will be given. This canine warning will be used to identify the handler team as a police canine unit, followed by an order to identify or sound off, and consequences if the subject does not comply with orders to surrender. The officers will then wait a reasonable period of time giving the subject the ability to come out of hiding or to at least announce him or herself. In very large buildings this period of time could be as long as three to five minutes; in small buildings this could be as short as one minute.

In the event the officers have to go from one segment of a building to another where it is doubtful the canine warning could be heard the officer should issue another canine warning. The size of the building and probability that a subject heard the canine warning will determine if multiple canine warnings must be given.

Whenever the deployment of a police canine, whether on-lead or off-lead, for the purpose of searching for and/or apprehending a suspect, results in physical canine contact with a subject, regardless of any injuries sustained, the incident will be considered a use of force and therefore documented appropriately as outlined in [GO 710 Reporting Use of Force](#) and [SOP C1-05 Canine Unit](#).

.50 Call-Out Procedures

Requests for off-duty call-outs of K-9 Units may be made by any on-duty sworn supervisor, only when there is a compelling need for K-9 Unit assistance. Communications will be responsible for contacting the on-call K-9 unit.

.60 Request By Outside Agencies

Requests by outside agencies for K-9 assistance outside the jurisdiction of the Colorado Springs Police Department must be coordinated and approved by the duty lieutenant. The request must be initiated by an on-duty watch commander, or equivalent official, in the requesting jurisdiction.

.70 Canine Tactical Considerations

Scene containment is essential in order to effectively utilize the K-9 Unit. Crime scenes should be quickly cordoned off, utilizing as many officers as needed to effectively prevent escape, pending the arrival of the K-9 unit.

Containment officers coming into an area should consider using emergency lights and siren to announce their presence, thus causing the suspect to slow his/her escape for fear of apprehension.

Containment officers should remain in, or close to, their vehicles (as opposed to entering the search area) to prevent their scent from distracting the K-9 while tracking a suspect.

A K-9 is much more effective if a scene is not inundated with the scent of several officers. If you lose sight of a suspect during a foot pursuit, consider setting up a perimeter and calling a K-9 unit immediately as opposed to conducting an extensive search with several officers.

A secondary officer should accompany the K-9 handler on all deployments to cover the handler who must focus their attention on the dog. The assisting officer should cover the K9 handler in a tactical manner as directed by the K9 handler.