

Principles for Standards for Police Service Dogs

The goal of the Provincial Standards for police service dogs is to have effective and accountable police service dog units, which minimize bites and injuries, without hindering the appropriate use of police service dogs to further public safety.

- **Police dogs are important policing tools and can be used for a variety of tasks.** They can be used for: searching and locating suspects; apprehending suspects; searching for evidence; protecting the handler; searching for missing people; controlling crowds; searching for drugs or explosives; and community relations and other demonstration events.
- **Police dogs are also intermediate weapons; police dogs bite.** One of the tasks of police dogs is to apprehend suspects by biting. Police dogs can bite either on command, or automatically in certain situations commensurate with their training, or sometimes even accidentally. The potential for a dog bite is inherent in every deployment, although not every deployment will result in a bite.
- **A police dog bite can cause injury.** Sometimes the injury can be substantial and serious.
- **The use of a dog, as with all other force options, must be proportional to the level of risk posed to the officer, the suspect and the community as a whole.** The need to locate or apprehend someone must always be balanced with the potential for a police dog bite and its likely resulting injury.
- **Police dog bites must be minimized as much as reasonably possible and must be proportional to the risk posed to the handler and to others.** Minimizing bites can take the form of determining not to deploy a dog at all if the circumstances are not serious enough (e.g. shoplifting, by-law offences), to adjusting handling techniques to limit the possibility of a bite (e.g., shortening leash; keeping visual contact; and recalling the dog) and removing the dog off a bite as soon as possible.
- **Police dogs must be well trained.** They require high levels of initial training, and continuous maintenance of their performance. Dogs must be able to perform at an appropriate level throughout the year, not just at annual testing. Training a dog to release the bite promptly on command is extremely important; this includes the ability to release the bite even if the person may still be struggling due to fear or pain.
- **Police dogs must always be under control of their handler, and the handler is always responsible for the behaviour of their dog.** This includes reasonably anticipating situations

where the dog may bite, even if unprovoked, and taking all reasonable actions to prevent such behaviour or circumstances (e.g., keeping distance; keeping dog on short leash; and visual contact). It is also acknowledged that, sometimes, despite appropriate training and handling, dogs may not perform perfectly every time.

- **There must be accountability for the use of police dogs.** This accountability includes deploying dogs only when appropriate and with care, providing prompt treatment if a bite occurs, detailed reporting and review of all bites, as well as maintaining data of the performance of individual dog-handler teams, as well as dog squads overall.

Section 1.0 – Use of Force	Page 1 of 2
Sub Section 1.4 – Police Service Dogs	Effective: September 1, 2015
Subject 1.4.1 – General Requirements	Revised: n/a

Definitions

“Bite” – a police dog’s use of mouth and teeth to grab or hold a person’s body or clothes.

“Director” – the director of police services, Ministry of Justice.

“Police dog equipment” – includes but is not limited to collars, leashes, crates, and harnesses.

“Police dog handler” – a police officer who is trained to handle police dogs.

Standards

The chief constable, chief officer, or commissioner may:

Permitted uses of a police dog

- (1) Authorize the use of police dogs for the following purposes:
 - (a) Tracking or searching for persons who may have committed, or be about to commit, an offence;
 - (b) Apprehending persons by police dog bite or display;
 - (c) Tracking or searching for missing or lost persons;
 - (d) Searching for drugs;
 - (e) Searching for explosives/firearms;
 - (f) Searching for evidence;
 - (g) Crowd control;
 - (h) Community relations and other demonstration events; and
 - (i) Other uses approved by the director.

The chief constable, chief officer, or commissioner must:

Police dog and handler training and qualifications

- (2) Ensure that every police dog handler and their assigned police dog successfully complete a training course for police dog work and are qualified to perform the operational functions specifically authorized.

Responsibilities of the police dog handler

- (3) Ensure that every police dog handler is required to keep their police dog under control at all times by commands and/or physical restrictions, or other relevant action.
- (4) Require that police dog handlers take reasonable steps to ensure that the police dog does not bite when it would be reasonable to search for, locate, arrest or apprehend a person without a bite, including but not limited to:
 - (a) Shortening the length of the leash;
 - (b) Maintaining visual contact with their police dog; and
 - (c) Recalling the police dog.
- (5) Require that police dog handlers must deploy their dog on a leash, unless the environment/terrain or the risk involved would make this unreasonable.
- (6) Require that police dog handlers must inspect all police dog equipment on a weekly basis to ensure it is in good working order, and replace any faulty equipment.

Policies and procedures

- (7) Ensure all policies and procedures are consistent with these *BC Provincial Policing Standards*.

Annotation

Bite definition – this does not include bites in training on training equipment, such as a padded sleeve or suit.

Section 1.0 – Use of Force	Page 1 of 4
Sub Section 1.4 – Police Service Dogs	Effective: September 1, 2015
Subject 1.4.2 – Threshold and Circumstances of Police Dog Use	Revised: n/a

Definitions

“Bite” – a police dog’s use of mouth and teeth to grab or hold a person’s body or clothes.

“Bodily harm” – any hurt or injury to a person that interferes with the health or comfort of the person and is more than merely transient or trifling in nature.

“Deployment” – a police dog performing an operational task.

“Exigent circumstances” – circumstances where a delay in taking action would result in danger to human life or safety or where action is necessary to prevent the continuation of an offence which threatens human life or safety.

“Handler-dog team” – a police officer who is trained to handle police dogs and the police dog assigned to that officer.

“Police dog handler” – a police officer who is trained to handle police dogs.

“Reasonable grounds” – includes both a subjective and an objective component, and means that the officer must personally believe that the decision or action is necessary, and in addition, the decision or action must be able to stand the test of whether an objective third person, who is acting reasonably—and is informed of the officer's training, experience and the factual circumstances known at the time—would also reach the same conclusion.

Standards

The chief constable, chief officer, or commissioner must:

Threshold and circumstances of using a police dog where a bite may occur

- (1) Prohibit police dog handlers from permitting a police dog to bite a person, and prohibit dog handlers from permitting a police dog to continue to be deployed if it would reasonably be expected that the police dog would bite a person, unless:
 - (a) The person is causing bodily harm to an officer, a third party or the police dog;
 - (b) The police dog handler is satisfied, on reasonable grounds, that the person’s behaviour will imminently cause bodily harm to an officer, a third party, or the police dog; or

- (c) The person is fleeing or hiding and there are reasonable grounds for their immediate apprehension by a police dog bite.
- (2) In addition to Standard (1) above, require that police dog handlers consider the following prior to and during each deployment of a police dog, and conclude, on reasonable grounds, that the risk of a bite is justified:
 - (a) Whether there is lawful authority to arrest;
 - (b) That no lesser use of force would be appropriate or effective; and
 - (c) The totality of the circumstances, including, but not limited to:
 - (i) The seriousness of the offence believed to have been committed or about to be committed;
 - (ii) The potential risk to any person, including the person being apprehended;
 - (iii) The identity of the person being apprehended, if known;
 - (iv) Whether the person could be apprehended at a later time;
 - (v) The age of the person being apprehended, in particular whether the person is reasonably believed to be a young person, or elderly;
 - (vi) Whether there is a weapon involved;
 - (vii) Whether the person being apprehended has a history of violence or has demonstrated violence or threatened violence; and
 - (viii) Any injury likely to result from a police dog bite.

Warnings prior to a bite

- (3) Require that police dog handlers give a loud verbal warning prior to permitting their dog to bite, unless such a warning would be impractical or place any one, including the police handler-dog team, at risk of bodily harm.
- (4) Require that the warning described in Standard (3) above identifies the handler as a police officer with a police dog, and advises that the person may be bitten if they do not comply with police instructions.

Removing the dog from a bite

- (5) Require that police dog handlers ensure that their police dog releases a bite as soon as reasonably possible.
- (6) Require that police dog handlers consider the following when determining when it is reasonable to have a police dog release the bite:
 - (a) That a person may struggle from pain or fear in response to a police dog bite;
 - (b) That a person may not be able to remain completely passive, or may not be able to completely comply with police officer directions while being bitten; and

- (c) That these behaviours, of struggling due to pain or fear or the inability to completely comply with directions due to pain or fear, on their own, are insufficient reasons to not have the police dog release the bite.

Searching for a person for investigative purposes

- (7) Require that police dog handlers consider the totality of the circumstances prior to, and during each deployment of a police dog, and conclude, on reasonable grounds, that the use of a police dog to search for a person is justified. The totality of the circumstances includes, but is not limited to:
 - (a) The seriousness of the offence believed to have been committed or about to be committed;
 - (b) The potential risk to any person, including the person being apprehended;
 - (c) The identity of the person being apprehended, if known;
 - (d) Whether the person could be apprehended at a later time;
 - (e) The age of the person being apprehended, in particular whether the person is reasonably believed to be a young person, or elderly;
 - (f) Whether there is a weapon involved;
 - (g) Whether the person being apprehended has a history of violence or has demonstrated violence or threatened violence; and
 - (h) Any injury likely to result from a police dog bite.
- (8) Require that, when searching for a person, police dog handlers take reasonable steps as specified in Standard 4 of *BCPPS 1.4.1 General Requirements*.

Children

- (9) Prohibit police dog handlers from deploying their police dog to search for or apprehend a person, if the person is reasonably believed to be 12-years-old or younger, unless:
 - (a) The police dog handler has reasonable grounds to believe that the child poses an imminent risk of grievous bodily harm or death to any person, including themselves; or
 - (b) The child is a missing or lost person.

Warnings prior to a search

- (10) Require that police dog handlers give a loud verbal warning prior to using their police dog to search for a person, unless there are exigent circumstances.
- (11) Require that the warning described in Standard (10) above identifies the handler as a police officer with a police dog, and advises that the person may be bitten if they do not comply with police instructions.

- (12) Require that police dog handlers, after providing a warning referred to in Standard (10) above, allow a reasonable time, based on the totality of the circumstances, for a person to show themselves.

Maintaining distance

- (13) Require that police dog handlers keep their police dog a reasonable distance away from any person, including a person that has been apprehended.

Post-bite incident requirements

- (14) Ensure, in every case of a police dog bite, that:
- (a) Appropriate medical attention is immediately provided or offered;
 - (b) If the person who was bitten refuses medical treatment, that this refusal is documented;
 - (c) Any injuries are photographed, unless the person who was bitten refuses to have the injuries photographed;
 - (d) If the person who was bitten refuses to have the injuries photographed, that this refusal is documented;
 - (e) A supervisor attends the scene as soon as possible, unless it is unreasonable for the supervisor to attend due to distance, or other circumstances which make attendance impracticable; and
 - (f) If the person who was bitten is under 18 years of age, that the parent or guardian is notified.

Policies and procedures

- (15) Ensure all policies and procedures are consistent with these *BC Provincial Policing Standards*

Annotations

Bite definition – this does not include bites in training on training equipment, such as a padded sleeve or suit.

Deployment definition – having a police dog present at an incident in case a dog may be needed, but where the dog does not perform an operational task, is not considered to be a deployment of a police dog.

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Sub Section 1.4 – Police Service Dogs	Effective: September 1, 2015
Subject 1.4.3 – Reporting, Data and Review	Revised: n/a

Definitions

“Bite” – a police dog’s use of mouth and teeth to grab or hold a person’s body or clothes.

“Deployment” – a police dog performing an operational task.

“Director” – the director of police services, Ministry of Justice.

“Handler-dog team” – a police officer who is trained to handle police dogs and the police dog assigned to that officer.

“Police dog handler” – a police officer who is trained to handle police dogs.

“Use-of-force report” – the information that must be provided, in a provincially-approved format, when an officer applies force against a person.

Standards

The chief constable, chief officer, or commissioner must:

Post-bite reporting requirements

- (1) Ensure, in every case of a police dog bite, that:
 - (a) The police dog handler completes a use-of-force report, if the bite was on a person who was a subject in the police incident, even if the bite was accidental;
 - (b) The police dog handler completes a detailed written report, if the bite was on a person who was not a subject in the police incident;
 - (c) Any report referred to in Standard (1a) and (1b) above is completed as soon as reasonably practicable after the bite occurred; and
 - (d) Any report referred to in Standard (1a) and (1b) includes:
 - (i) The description of the incident;
 - (ii) The rationale for deploying the police dog;
 - (iii) Whether a warning was given;
 - (iv) The location of the bite(s);
 - (v) Detailed description of any injuries;
 - (vi) Photos of the injuries, unless the person who was bitten refused to have the injuries photographed;
 - (vii) Whether the police dog was commanded to bite; and

- (viii) Whether the police dog was always within the police dog handler's visual contact.

Data

- (2) Ensure that the following data is maintained, in a form and manner approved by the director, both for each handler-dog team and for the police dog unit as a whole:
 - (a) The number of persons located or found or apprehended or arrested using a police dog;
 - (b) The number of persons, who were subjects at a police incident, who were bitten by a police dog, including accidental bites;
 - (c) The number of persons, who were not subjects at a police incident, who were bitten by a police dog, including accidental bites; and
 - (d) The number of deployments for each type of authorized use of a police dog listed in Standard 1 of *BCPPS 1.4.1 General Requirements*.
- (3) Provide all reports and data annually, or more frequently as requested, to the director.

Review

- (4) Ensure that a supervisor monitors the training and operational activities of handler-dog teams, and the reports and data of each handler-dog team, and the dog unit overall, in order to determine compliance with the *BC Provincial Policing Standards* and the police force's policies and procedures, and to identify potential training issues.
- (5) Ensure that a supervisor conducts a documented review of every bite, including the circumstances leading up to the bite and actions taken after the bite, to ascertain whether the actions taken in relation to the bite conform with *BC Provincial Policing Standards*, as well as the police force's policies and procedures.
- (6) Ensure that a supervisor is authorized to and takes appropriate action to address any non-compliance or deficiencies in training identified by the activities in Standards (4) and (5) above.

Policies and procedures

- (7) Ensure all policies and procedures are consistent with these *BC Provincial Policing Standards*.

Annotations

Bite definition – this does not include bites in training on training equipment, such as a padded sleeve or suit.

Deployment definition – having a police dog present at an incident in case a dog may be needed, but where the dog does not perform an operational task, is not considered to be a deployment of a police dog.

Bite reports – these are to be completed as soon as reasonably practicable. In normal circumstances this would be within 48 hours of the bite. In exceptional circumstances, such as an in-custody death incident, a longer time period may be appropriate. Extensions are to be approved by the Chief Constable, Chief Officer, or Commissioner.

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Sub Section 1.4 – Police Service Dogs	Effective: September 1, 2015
Subject 1.4.4 – Performance Testing and Maintenance	Revised: n/a

Definitions

“Director” – the director of police services, Ministry of Justice.

“Handler-dog team” – a police officer who is trained to handle police dogs and the police dog assigned to that officer.

“Police dog handler” – a police officer who is trained to handle police dogs.

Standards

The chief constable, chief officer, or commissioner must:

Annual testing

- (1) Ensure that every police dog in use by the police force is tested in accordance with the following schedule:
 - (a) Prior to a dog entering service; and
 - (b) Annually thereafter.
- (2) Ensure that testing of police dogs, other than sniffer/detector dogs trained and used only for the purposes of locating drugs or explosives/firearms, is conducted in accordance with the protocols described in the *BC Police Dog (General Duty) Testing Requirements* attached to this Standard as Appendix “A”.
- (3) Ensure that a record of testing is maintained showing:
 - (a) The dates testing occurred; and
 - (b) The results of the testing.

Performance maintenance

- (4) Ensure that weekly practice is conducted by every handler-dog team, except for police dog handlers on leave.
- (5) Ensure that every handler-dog team continues to maintain the standard of performance required by the testing referred to in Standard (2) above, except for police dog handlers on leave.

- (6) Ensure detailed records of weekly practice sessions are kept and maintained, in a form and manner approved by the director, including:
- (a) The date;
 - (b) The identity of the dog and handler;
 - (c) The training exercises conducted;
 - (d) The performance and behavior of the dog; and
 - (e) Any aspects of performance that require attention.

Policies and procedures

- (7) Ensure all policies and procedures are consistent with these *BC Provincial Policing Standards*.

Annotations

Weekly maintenance – does not require that it is always conducted under the organization and supervision of agency instructors/supervisors. Weekly practice includes the handler practicing on their own with their dog.

Appendix “A” for *BCPPS 1.4.4 – Performance Testing and Maintenance*

BC Police Dog (General Duty) Testing Requirements

Version 1.0

Effective: September 1, 2015

BC Police Dog (General Duty) Testing Requirements

General Duty Police Dogs

In order to be deployed for duty in B.C., a police dog must successfully complete the testing for all the skills outlined below.

Testing is to be conducted by a person authorized by the chief constable, chief officer or commissioner. The tester must possess the necessary knowledge and skills and the ability to apply these objectively, as determined by the chief constable, chief officer or commissioner.

All skills modules must be successfully completed in order for a dog to become operational. If a dog fails to successfully complete any aspect of a module, the entire test for that module must be repeated (e.g., if one exercise in the obedience module is failed, the entire obedience module must be repeated successfully).

All testing results (successful and unsuccessful) must be documented, along with names of handlers and dogs, dates, times, location and comments.

During testing the dog must wear exactly the same equipment that the dog will be deployed with.

Skills Modules

Gun test

- (1) Gun sure: At any time during the testing, a minimum of two gun shots are fired. The dog must demonstrate that they are under control (continue to obey commands of the handler) and not fearful (e.g., cowering; running away).

Obedience

- (2) Heeling off leash, at various turns and speeds: The dog must follow and stay with the police dog handler without repeated commands or any physical assistance from the police dog handler. The dog must not interfere with the police dog handler.
- (3) Down from running on hand signal: While the police dog handler is running with their heeling dog, the police dog handler gives a command—by hand signal only—for the dog to down and stay while the handler keeps running.
- (4) Recall to police dog handler: From at least 20 metres away, the dog is recalled by the police dog handler.

- (5) Down on recall: The dog is recalled from a minimum from 20 metres away. As the dog is running towards the police dog handler, and approximately halfway, the police dog handler commands the dog to down.
- (6) Long down: The dog is left in a down for approximately five minutes. The police dog handler must be at least 10 metres away.

Note: The exercises must be conducted with a variety of distractions to test the dog's obedience in a variety of circumstances (e.g., other dogs and handlers training; balls being thrown; traffic; crowds).

All obedience exercises are to be conducted off-leash. The exercises can be conducted in any order.

Criminal apprehension

- (7) Bite under pressure and 'out': The dog is sent off lead to bite a person who is holding a weapon (minimum 20 metres away), and is behaving aggressively. The dog must, without hesitation, bite the person. The person then fights aggressively with the dog including using stick threats. The dog must confidently maintain its grip. After the person stops fighting, the police dog handler verbally commands the dog to 'out' (let go or release) the bite without physical influence. The dog must promptly let go. The police dog handler can determine whether to leave their dog guarding the person after the 'out', or whether to recall the dog.
- (8) Call off: The dog is sent off lead to bite a person (minimum 20 metres away) who has agitated/stimulated the dog before being released. The dog must immediately run to apprehend the person. The dog is called off when it is at least half way to the person (either by recall or down). The dog must not bite the person.
- (9) Bite and subsequent 'out' while person not completely passive: The dog is sent off lead to bite a person (minimum 20 metres away). The dog should, without hesitation, bite the person. The person fights with the dog. The person then stops fighting the dog, but is not completely passive. There must be some movement by the person (e.g., the movement could be a simulation of what may reasonably occur in real life where a dog bites someone and, through fear or pain, the person cannot completely follow directions from the police dog handler to remain still). The police dog handler verbally commands the dog to 'out' (let go or release) the bite. The dog must promptly let go. The police dog handler can determine whether to leave their dog guarding the person after the 'out,' or whether to recall the dog.
- (10) Escort: The police dog handler approaches and takes control of the situation, searches the person and with the dog, escorts the person away. The escort is to be conducted on lead.

Note: Dogs that do not release on command without physical influence cannot pass testing. Dogs that bite the suspect in the call-off exercise cannot pass testing.

Tracking

- (11) Urban/suburban track: The dog must complete a practical track in daylight or darkness by successfully working a six-block unknown, unmarked track, at least 15 minutes old (depending on weather conditions), laid by one quarry in an urban/suburban environment. The track will include a minimum of:
- (a) One cross track;
 - (b) Two turns (approximately 90 degrees);
 - (c) Short grass;
 - (d) Approximately 20 metres on hard surface (gravel or pavement);
 - (e) Two street crossings;
 - (f) Animal scent distraction; and
 - (g) Location of one track-related article.

Note: In order to pass, the dog must complete the entire track, as well as find and indicate one track-related article.

Evidence search

- (12) Evidence search: The dog must search for, and locate, items of simulated evidence. This exercise is to be conducted in an urban or suburban environment of a reasonably large area (e.g., approximately 20 by 20 metres). A number of articles of different types and sizes (to be determined by the tester) are to be placed or hidden. After locating one article, the dog is directed to search again and find another article. After the dog has located and indicated at least three articles, the exercise can be terminated. The dog must search intensely, consistently and independently.

Building search/ area search

- (13) Building search: The dog must search for, and locate, a person who is hiding in a building. The handler-dog team is evaluated on the following: The dog must search intensely and independently, yet under direction from the handler. The dog must give a clear alert. The police dog handler must be able to direct the dog while maintaining relevant tactical principles.
- (14) Area search: The dog must search for and locate a person who is hiding in an outside area (approximately 100 by 100 metres). The handler-dog team is evaluated on the following: The dog must search intensely and independently, yet under direction from the police dog handler. The dog must give a clear alert. The police dog handler must be able to direct the dog while maintaining relevant tactical principles.

Note: The dog must successfully complete both exercise 13 and 14 prior to or at initial testing, before entering service (performance must be documented). At annual re-testing only one of these two exercises (either 13-Building search OR 14-Area search) is required to be conducted.



Police Service Dogs, 2016

Data reported to the Director of Police Services, as required by British Columbia Provincial Policing Standards (BCPPS) on the use of Police Service Dogs

The following table presents the first year of data collected under the requirements of the BCPPS for Police Service Dogs.

2016 BCPPS Police Service Dogs Data

	Transit	Saanich	VPD	Victoria	West Van	RCMP (& LMIPDS)*	BC Total
BCPPS 1.4.3							
2(a): Locations/Apprehensions/Arrests	0	23	583	91	30	2,484	3,211
2(b): Subjects Bitten	0	1	166	11	5	221	404
2(c): Non-Subjects Bitten	0	0	9**	1	0	13***	23
2(d): Authorized Deployments per s.1 of BCPPS 1.4.1							
1(a): Tracks/Searches for Suspects	0	97	1,367	218	59	3,986	5,727
1(b): Apprehensions by Bite or Display	0	16	553	91	22	532	1,214
1(c): Tracks/Searches for Missing Persons	0	1	0	5	1	399	406
1(d): Searching for Drugs	0	4	2	30	0	376	412
1(e): Searching for Explosives/Firearms	34	0	26	26	0	496	582
1(f): Searching for Evidence	0	16	39	42	6	2,044	2,147
1(g): Crowd Control	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
1(h): Community Relations/Other Events	55	10	45	11	8	98	227
1(i): Other Uses Approved by Director	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Notes:

The definition of “bite” used in collecting these statistics is the definition set out in the BCPPS: “Bite - a police dog’s use of mouth and teeth to grab or hold a person’s body or clothes.” This means that the provincial statistics include incidents which did not result in any injury to a person, as well as accidental bites to police officers. This definition may differ from the definition of “bite” used in other contexts.

* Abbotsford, Delta, New Westminster, and Port Moody form part of the RCMP Lower Mainland Integrated Police Dog Service (LMIPDS); these dogs receive the same training and cross jurisdictional boundaries.

** Six of these nine non-subjects were police officers.

*** Eight of these 13 non-subjects were police officers.

2015 Police dog bites in BC (Jan-Dec)

Agency	Total reported bites
West Vancouver	2
Victoria	7
Saanich	2
Vancouver	168
RCMP (incl. integrated units)*	256
Total	435

*RCMP integrated K9 units include Abbotsford, Port Moody, Delta, and New Westminster.