



Search & Rescue Dog Association of Alberta

Standard Operating Procedures

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Search and Rescue Dog Association of Alberta

Standard Operating Procedures

The purpose of this document is to provide SARDAА Members with an overview of the operating procedures.

1) DEFINITION AND SHORT HISTORY OF SARDAА

SARDAА was officially formed in November of 1989 when it was registered with the Companies Branch of the government of Alberta under the Societies Act. Charitable Organization status under Revenue Canada was obtained in July of 1991. There were six original members of SARDAА – Kevin George, Barb McLeod, George Hart, Mike Andresen, Michelle Limoges and Bob Wynnyk.

2) MISSION STATEMENT

SARDAА's mission is to provide authorities with properly trained, competent search dog/handler teams for communities in the province of Alberta, and Canada.

Handlers will have working knowledge of SAR techniques, SAR management, evidence preservation, courtroom procedures, navigation, survival, first aid, and other specialized training as required. Members of SARDAА are expected to follow guidelines set out for training, participate in team training exercises, demonstrate a team-oriented attitude and train themselves and their dog to the best of their ability, to ensure that the 'potential survivor' has a well trained and highly competent team working towards his/her rescue.

3) GOALS

SARDAА's goal is to provide SAR-dog instruction, training and information so as to develop well-trained dogs and handlers for search and rescue purposes; and, to provide a minimum two dog/handler teams to authorities when requested.

4) PHILOSOPHY

Our philosophy is to assist others, and to preserve life using well-trained dogs. SARDAА members do not freelance; our teams respond to official agencies only.

SAR is not a game! As in any search training, both the dog and handler must train and prepare themselves to avoid becoming a lost person as well. The use of SAR dog teams is of little value if teams are not trained in a professional manner and if they do not understand both their value as well as their limitations. We strive to instill this knowledge in our members.

SARDAА requires that team personnel attending a search or taking part in a public function on behalf of the organization wear the team uniform of a red SARDAА shirt and black pants, or red coveralls.



5) OBJECTIVE

Our objective is to train dog and handler teams in the skills needed for them to work throughout the province of Alberta, and elsewhere, in times of disaster or emergency and to provide professional support to local response teams in order to aid in the work of locating lost or missing persons who are trapped or injured on land or in water.

6) MEMBERSHIP LEVELS – for details, see Standards Manual

- Supporting Associate (*Regular*)
- Supporting Associate (*Field Tech*)
- Associate
- Active
- Active Administrator

Other membership levels

- Friends of SARDAA
- Life

Application for membership must be submitted on an application form provided by the organization.

7) MEMBERSHIP

7.1 Inquiries are answered by the Secretary via letter, hard copy or email. Potential members are invited to make an appointment for an evaluation of their dog. No such evaluation is necessary for Supporting Associate (*Field Tech*) membership and Friends of SARDAA membership.

7.2 All potential dog applicants must complete/pass a drive evaluation (applies to Supporting Associate (*Regular*) members joining with a dog.).
Dogs over the age of two years will not normally be considered; exceptions will be considered by the Training Director and the Executive should a special case present itself.

7.3 All existing member's new dogs are to submit to the dog pre-evaluation.

7.4 All new Supporting Associate members (*Regular & Field Tech*) are placed on a 6-month probation period – see section 8 for the details of the SARDAA Screening Process.

8) APPLICATION SCREENING PROCESS FOR SUPPORTING ASSOCIATE (REGULAR) AND SUPPORTING ASSOCIATE (FIELD TECH)

Applicant requirements:

- 1) Complete SARDAA application form and submit to SARDAA secretary with fee.



- 2) Successfully complete a drive evaluation of their dog (applies to Supporting Associate (*Regular*) members joining with a dog.)
- 3) Authorize a criminal background check (provided by Edmonton Police Service) with satisfactory results.
- 4) Submit three references, along with contact information (references not to include family members.)
- 5) Participate in an interview with the SARDAA Executive and membership at a General meeting.

Following application:

- 1) Once the application is accepted, the applicant will be placed on a six-month probation period until he/she passes the screening process and the Supporting Associate (*Regular*) dog evaluations if the dog is over 1 year.
- 2) Once accepted the applicant will receive – confirming letter, tax receipt for fees, membership card, one SARDAA t-shirt (logo only), one dog in-training-vest, copy of SOPs, Training Standards and Personnel Handbook. Each new member is placed on the mailing list and will receive a phone card (phone card included Associate and Active members).
- 3) Throughout this six-month period (from application to end of probation period) all information is to be documented by the preceptor.
- 4) At the end of the six-month probation period, the preceptor will present the probationary member to the membership at a meeting along with a recommendation of:
 1. Move to full member (Remove from Probation)
 2. Change membership status
 3. Renew probation
 4. Release from the Association **

****If released from the Search and Rescue Dog Association of Alberta after the six-month period, the probationary member will hand in all material or items they have received from the association. (Standards, SOPs, radio, etc.) These items will be brought with them to the General/Annual meeting when the six-month probation period recommendation comes forward.**

SELECTION PROCESS

- **Inform** the applicant and confirm interest.
- **Assign** preceptor to oversee screening process.
- **Define** to applicant the six-month probation period and their preceptor’s role.
- **Confirm** applicants understanding of application process.
- **Ensure** applicant’s criminal background check. Edmonton Police Service is performing this task.
- **Contact** the references.
- **Arrange** for applicant’s interview with SARDAA Executive and members at a General meeting.



- **Inform** organization of new applicant with recommendation for acceptance or release.

- **Organize** volunteer application file:
 1. Application
 2. Criminal check
 3. Interview documentation
 4. Volunteer agreement
 5. Probation evaluation
 6. Disciplinary documentation

PRECEPTOR

- 1) The preceptor is to be appointed by the SARDAAs Executive.
- 2) A preceptor is to be a SARDAAs member of no less than five years of upstanding SARDAAs membership status.
- 3) The preceptor will review this screening process with applicant, ensuring understanding by applicant.
- 4) The preceptor will contact applicant's references.
- 5) The preceptor will bring forward the application to the SARDAAs Executive and members for an interview at a General meeting
- 6) The preceptor will document all activities pertaining to the application and probation period.
- 7) After the six-month probation period, the preceptor will bring forward the probationary member to membership with recommendations of:
 - Move to full member (Remove from Probation)
 - Change membership status
 - Renew probation
 - Release from the association



VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT (WAIVER FORM)

I _____ hereby declare that I have an understanding of the Search and Rescue Dog Association Bylaws, Standards and Standard Operating Procedure manual and accept the responsibility as a member to ensure my obligations are being met.

Name: (please print) _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Preceptor: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____



9) MOVING UP LEVELS

9.1 SUPPORTING ASSOCIATE (*REGULAR*)

Supporting Associate (*Regular*) members are placed on a six-month probation period. During this six-month period, he/she must pass the screening process and successfully complete the Supporting Associate (*Regular*) dog handler evaluations. Supporting Associate (*Regular*) members are encouraged to begin obtaining the mandatory courses as stated in the Personnel Handbook.

9.2 SUPPORTING ASSOCIATE (*Field Tech*)

Supporting Associate (*Field Tech*) may submit a letter of request to the President and Training Coordinator to move up to Active level in order to act as back up for the SAR dogs/handlers once the following criteria has been met:

- i) Complete their six month probation period.
- ii) Obtain the mandatory courses as specified in the Personnel Handbook.
- iii) Submit a completed Personnel Handbook to the Training Director.
- iv) Pass the Field Tech Evaluation.

Upon successful completion of the above criteria and if accepted by 2/3 majority vote of the current Active Membership, they will receive:

- a letter of congratulation
- a red Active Level member T-shirt with SARDA A logo on front and Field Tech on back
- four SARDA A crests
- a new membership card

9.3 ASSOCIATE

Once the dog/handler team successfully passes the Supporting Associate (*Regular*) Evaluation with the course requirement they move to the Associate level and will receive:

- a letter of congratulations
- certificate
- new membership card.
- clothing equipment.

Associate members are encouraged to continue acquiring equipment and obtaining the mandatory courses as stated in the Personnel Handbook and continue to utilize the Personnel Handbook.

After handing in their completed Personnel Handbook, handbook approved, and passing the Field Tech Evaluation, they can submit to an internal search profile evaluation.

Before moving up to Active membership, they must:

- i) Meet the mandatory course requirements for the affiliated profile.
- ii) Pass the evaluation in any one of the search profiles.
- iii) If vote in favor for that profile, they must pass the Active Accreditation before attending a search.

9.4 ACTIVE LEVEL - Once the dog/handler team successfully passes the Associate evaluation in a profile with the mandatory courses as stated in the Personnel Handbook,



they will move up to the Active Level in this profile only and will receive -

- a letter acknowledging their new Active Level membership
- a red Active team t-shirt with the SARDA A logo on front and "SARDA A dog handler" on the back
- Clothing equipment.
- four SARDA A crests
- certificate
- new membership card
- a SAR dog vest; SARDA A will contribute 50 per cent of the cost

Active dog teams must complete an Active accreditation in one of the profiles in order to be utilized out in the field.

9.6 ACTIVE ADMINISTRATOR

The role of the SARDA A Administrator includes but not limited to aid in receiving calls and dispatch dog teams and field tech for search incidents.

- If requested by a Tasking Agency and deployed by the SARDA A team may act as an aid to the SAR Management at command base only.
- Aid with preceptor duties.
- Takes their directions from the SARDA A Executive.

10) SARDA A PERSONNEL HANDBOOK

SARDA A Personnel Handbook is contained in a separate document available from the web site – www.sardaa.ca

The Personnel Handbook was designed to aid in the development of all SARDA A personnel. The goal is to provide qualified, team-oriented personnel to perform most types of search and rescue. The handbook will guide members in training by defining objectives and tracking progress. General SARDA A requirements will be learned as well as skills from the Wilderness/Urban Profile. This document covers personnel training expectations in more depth than the Standards manual and SOP manual but does not replace these manuals. This handbook was not intended to include dog training.

All SARDA A members will have a field evaluation before they become Active members. The skills acquired from this handbook will allow any member to act as field tech when needed. For dog handlers, this would be expected within the first two years of joining the association. Supporting Associate (*Field Tech*) will be expected to complete the requirements and perform the test within a year and a half.

11) SARDA A TRAINING STANDARDS

SARDA A Training Standards are contained in a separate document available from the web site – www.sardaa.ca

SARDA A Training Standards include the following profiles -

- Wilderness/Urban (Air Scent)



- Wilderness/Urban (Tracking)
- Disaster
- Water
- Human Remains Detection

12) LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Leave of Absence will be granted to a member upon written request to the president. Leaves of absence will be granted for a term not more than one year for Active members, six months for all other membership levels, with the possibility of an extension upon written request to the President.

- Active members on leave will not be called out on searches unless specially called by the president back to active duty.
- Members on leave will return any radios, GPS and other equipment issued by SARDAAs to the equipment chair.
- Members on leaves of absence forfeit any privileges provided by SARDAAs, such as seminars, equipment funding, etc.
- Membership fees shall be waived during Leave of Absence.
- On return from a leave of absence, Active members will be on a three-month evaluation period and must successfully complete a callout evaluation before being reinstated for call outs.

13) TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

A member may terminate membership in SARDAAs at any time by submitting a letter of resignation and or a verbal acknowledgment of termination of membership in SARDAAs to the president. The president will acknowledge the resignation by letter. Non-payment of dues will constitute resignation.

The executive may ask any member to resign if the executive believes the member is not meeting training requirements, is not functioning as a team member, or is damaging the reputation of SARDAAs. The membership may be terminated if at least two-thirds of the voting members vote in favor of termination. All SARDAAs property, including patches, radio etc. will be returned promptly. Membership fees will not be refunded.

14) FUNDING

Funding is obtained through membership fees, sale of commemorative items (t-shirts, pins, decals, ball caps etc.) and through donations from organizations and individuals. SARDAAs also runs fundraising events throughout the year. Our members organize our fundraisers without the assistance of outside paid fundraising organizations. All Active, Supporting Associate (*Regular*), Supporting Associate (*Field Tech*) and Associate members are expected to attend these events. All members, family and guests are invited to attend and participate.

15) BUDGET/FINANCIALS/CRA STATUS

SARDAAs has Charitable Organization status through Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CRA) allowing tax receipts to be issued to eligible donors, following strict CRA



guidelines. Registration # - 889593463RR0001. To be valid, receipts must be signed by a member of the SARDAA executive.

Tax receipts are issued for donations and other contributions to the organization at the time of the donation. A financial statement is compiled FOLLOWING THE END OF THE FISCAL YEAR, which is September 30.

16) OFFICERS

Officers are elected by the voting membership for a term of one year with no restriction on the number of terms a position may be held. Officers are - President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Training Director. The responsibilities of each position are detailed in the ByLaws.

17) CALL-OUTS

17.1 Procedures

- The emergency call-out phone number is (780) **405-6084** ; One of Active or Executive members is designated, on a rotating basis, to respond to a callout 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The person on call will respond to the page, evaluate the call and if appropriate contact the Active team members to respond to the incident.
- Only those on the Active Accredited* Team or Active Field Tech will be deployed to call-outs. No other team member will respond unless called under extraordinary circumstances.
- Active team members must respond to 50 per cent of eligible* search call outs in each calendar year. Failure to do so will result in a membership review by the SARDAA executive.
- Active team dog handlers will follow all directions of on-site senior dog handler without question unless that response will jeopardize the safety of the dog/handler team. Objections will be reviewed at a de-briefing after the call-out is completed. Members not prepared to comply will be removed from the call-out by the senior dog handler and stood down.
- Active members who will be on holiday or away and unavailable will inform the executive members on call out duty.

*Eligible search call out means a search request for which the dog/handler team are accredited.

* Accredited means a dog and handler team that have passed the Active level evaluation in any individual search profile.

17.2 SEARCH REPORTS

- Search reports - SARDAA's three-part search report form allows the searcher to write their report on site; Searchers will turn in one copy to the search manager, retain one and forward the third copy to the SARDAA secretary



- Ideally, search reports should be completed and turned in to the team leader at the completion of the search incident before leaving the site. If they are not turned in on site, they must be submitted to the SARDAAs secretary within 24 hours of a search; it is important to file reports on time in order to maintain accurate, up-to-date records.
- Reports not filed on time may result in the team's removal from call-out duty.

17.3 PUBLIC RELATIONS (MEDIA)

The members of the media should be considered as friends of searchers, not as enemies or adversaries. The job of the media is to provide information via radio, television and print to members of the general public; they will do this any way they can that is within the law. Anything you say to the media, before, during or after an interview or in casual conversation, can be used by the media in a story; there is no such thing as 'off the record'! Also, beware of expressing opinions or providing any information to persons at or near the search site you do not know.

Always be courteous to the media but **DO NOT** answer any questions or offer any information or opinions of any type. **REMEMBER** - all enquiries must be referred to the **onsite Agency** media liaison person or to the search manager; and, failing any of these people being available refer enquiries to the SARDAAs senior dog handler on site.

17.4 FAMILY MEMBERS OF THE VICTIM

Common sense, compassion and good judgment should of course be exercised when and if team members have occasion to become involved with the victim's family. Do not offer false hope, opinions on what you think happened to the victim, or on how the search is being handled.

On most searches, the agency will act as a buffer between the family and the searchers. In some situations, our teams will have occasion to meet members of the family. Focus on your job as a dog handler and what your role is and how you plan to cover your search area. You are qualified to answer questions about your role and about you and your dog's training, capabilities and limitations.

We have found that the experience of having members of the family at the search site is stressful to our teams. SARDAAs executive and senior dog handler on site will be tasked with taking a lead role in acting as a buffer between the family and the handlers. Where possible and if necessary, Victim Services can be engaged to assist SARDAAs teams with relations with the victim's family on site.

17.5 DE-BRIEFING PROCEDURES

Immediately following each search incident and when practical, a short de-briefing will take place away from the search site for all team members involved in the incident.

Within one week of the incident a formal de-briefing will take place with a facilitator; all team members involved must attend this de-briefing.

SARDAAs also maintains members who are trained in Critical Incident Stress debriefing; all members are encouraged to make use of this expertise. Refer to the Personnel Handbook for more details.



17.6 REIMBURSEMENT OF MEMBERS ATTENDING CALL-OUTS

Active Team members who are called by the SARDAA Executive to attend official searches shall be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses.

Reimbursement may originate with the official agency responsible for the search incident, or in some cases by SARDAA itself. A SARDAA expense form shall be completed by each team for each call-out, signed by the individual and by the Executive member responsible for the call-out. Forms are available from the Treasurer.

