

WASATCH BACKCOUNTRY RESCUE

Avalanche Rescue Dog Team Acceptance and Standards for Verification

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WASATCH BACKCOUNTRY RESCUE

HISTORY

Wasatch Backcountry Rescue was established in the Winter of 1976, after the avalanche death of Doug Schreiber. On January 6, 1978, a meeting was held at Alta Central with representatives from Solitude, Alta, Snowbird, Wasatch Powderbird Guides, and the Salt Lake County Sheriffs Department. It was agreed that a non-profit, volunteer, backcountry rescue organization would be formed. Members would come from the ski areas, Alta, Snowbird, Solitude, and Brighton in addition to the Wasatch Powderbird Guides. Member expertise would be in rock and ice climbing, the treatment of ski injuries, avalanche rescue work, and an excellent knowledge of the backcountry ski area. It was agreed the group would work directly under the authority of the Salt Lake County Sheriffs Department on a will call basis.

In 1977, the first dog was brought into Little Cottonwood Canyon by Wasatch Powderbird Guides and training was started for avalanche rescue dogs. Realizing the dog's usefulness, the ski areas followed suit and trained dogs for their Individual areas.

Wasatch Backcountry Rescue is now recognized as a established and experienced backcountry rescue group working mostly in the Wasatch mountains of Utah.

PURPOSE

Wasatch Backcountry Rescue is a non-profit, backcountry rescue organization, working under the direction of the Salt Lake County Sheriffs Office, Search and Rescue. Our primary purpose is quick response for avalanche rescue and winter related incidents using trained search and rescue dogs and professional personnel familiar with the local mountain terrain. Our secondary purpose is to educate the local backcountry skiers in safe techniques for winter travel in the mountains plus the equipment and methods used for self-rescue in case of any accident .

WASATCH BACKCOUNTRY RESCUE

STANDARDS OF ACCEPTANCE for K9 Handlers & Dogs

Over the years, WBR Teams have consistently demonstrated that they are one of the most competent and efficient Quick Response, Search and Rescue Resources available to respond to Avalanche Incidents. This is due in large part to their training as Area Ski Patrollers. As such, it is expected that a Dog Team Handler, to be tested for WBR Certification and placement on the WBR Callout List, be an EXPERIENCED PATROLLER or AVALANCHE PROFESSIONAL, one that is competent and able to make decisions and give advice regarding: Snow Safety Assessment, Avalanche Evaluation & Control, Route Finding, Safe Routes In and Efficient Use of Resources Available. And while they may not have to assume the role, they should be capable of fulfilling the duties of the Accident Site Commander.

They should be willing and capable of responding, on short notice, to emergency avalanche incidents, in and around their Ski Areas, or in response to a callout from another Ski Area or from a duly authorized Search Management Agency.

Below are listed some Qualifications and Considerations to be reviewed by Ski Area Management or other Organizations when proposing a Dog Team for Candidacy:

- The Handler should be a member of Wasatch Backcountry Rescue and meet their requirements for rescue membership. This includes the support and authorization of their local County Search Management Agency and their Ski Area Management.
- The candidate should be thoroughly competent with their AREA AVALANCHE INCIDENT PLAN / AREA RESCUE PLAN and understand the Incident Command System and the Dog Team's role in a SEARCH EFFORT. And be familiar with the various tasks associated with "Initial/Hasty Search" and "Multi Stage Search" and be capable of performing all of the various roles.
- He or She should be cognizant of the different Search Environments – (In Area, Road & Village, and Back Country), and be capable of performing the needed tasks, and working with and reporting to other Search Teams and Incident Commanders.
- Additional Handler attributes to consider for working backcountry incidents are winter survival capabilities for the Handler and canine plus a knowledge of the Wasatch mountain terrain. Handler emergency care standards are O.E.C or UT E.M.T plus C.P.R. Also knowledge of K9 1st Aid is a valuable Handler asset.
- A Dog Team Handler should be physically fit and capable of competent maneuvering on snow by skis (type appropriate to conditions), or other snow traveling devices (e.g. snowshoes); whatever it takes to get to the incident and accomplish the search.
- A responding Dog Team Handler should have, and be competent in using, the equipment needed for responding to various types of avalanche incidents.
- The Dog Team should be able to navigate and search during the day or night.
- The handler should be competent with map and compass to navigate to a search site and direct others. And also be able to translate their search activity to an incident operation map, including route taken in, areas searched and evaluation of Teams effectiveness [POD], areas left uncovered, alerts, weak alerts or areas of interest, clues, wind direction, etc.
- As a Dog Team Handler it will be important that they understand scent theory and how conditions at an avalanche site can affect the dog's scenting ability; and thus be able to plan the most efficient search of the area. They will also need to be able to assess how their dog is working and secure enough to report any deficiencies. Concern for potential victims comes first.
- It is required that Handlers are able to control their canine and provide for its care and safety at all times. If any behavior problems arise, it is the Handlers responsibility to resolve the problem.
- As professionals and in keeping with the spirit of WBR's cooperative interaction, it is expected that Handlers and their Areas actively participate and assist in the training and testing of other WBR Member Teams and expect the same in return. This should be viewed as a benefit – not an obligation

the Dog:

- The Dog must be one that is appropriate to the task, physically fit for avalanche search work, with no known problems that could affect these capabilities and able to endure long periods of winter conditions.
- The Dog must be kept current on all vaccinations.
- Dogs can be accepted into the verification program at six months of age or older and tested for Candidate Status.
- Dogs must be a minimum of 1 year of age to be tested for Level B [Emergency – Intermediate Search].
- Dogs must be a minimum of 18 Months of age to be tested for Level A [Operational – Advanced Search].

the Dog Team:

- ◆ To remain in the program a Candidate Team must pass obedience and search test within 18 Months from the date of their acceptance.
- ◆ To remain in the program a Level B Team must certify for Level A within 1 year of achieving Level B status.
- ◆ **To remain on the callout list, dog teams must renew their WBR certification, on an annual basis, by 12/31 of the current season**

WASATCH BACKCOUNTRY RESCUE

LEVELS OF VERIFICATION

AVALANCHE SEARCH TESTS

A. OPERATIONAL - Advanced Search

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

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

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

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

B. EMERGENCY - Intermediate Search

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

Level B testing is not a required "stepping stone", a team may elect to test for level A without having tested for level B, if the Handler feels they are ready.

C. CANDIDATE - Basic Search

Test handler in shallow hole with light snow cover in sight of dog. Look for strong indication, desire to dig, and response to reward system.

Basic obedience skills, sociability and Handler control should be evident.

WASATCH BACKCOUNTRY RESCUE

VALIDATION RULES

To remain in the program a Candidate Team must pass obedience and search test within 18 Months from the date of their acceptance.

To remain in the program a Level B Team must certify for Level A within 1 year of achieving Level B status.

To remain on the callout list, dog teams must renew their WBR certification, on an annual basis, by 12/31 of the current season.

ANNUAL VALIDATION

- Testing for Levels A & B will be held annually during the winter season. The Handlers will be expected to keep current with their yearly validation and contact the Dog Committee to set up testing. A list of Dog Committee members and qualified Evaluators is on Page 11.
- Testing times are early season with each member ski area helping with the testing and site preparation. Dog teams must renew their WBR certification, on an annual basis, by 12/31 of the current season.
- No more than two failures will be allowed during one season.

STANDARDS FOR EVALUATION

1. Number of evaluators shall be of an odd number, the minimum of which shall be three.
2. No more than one evaluator may exist on the panel who originates or is affiliated with the same area as the testing team.
3. Any protest of the test scenario must be presented and considered prior to the test, e.g. presence of smoke, fuel or female dog in heat cycle.
4. No team with a female dog in heat will be allowed to test with other teams present.
5. All evaluators are answerable to the W.B.R. Officers and may be dismissed by same. However, all test results are final and may not be reversed by W.B.R.
6. Selection of an evaluator is by unanimous, (100%), agreement of the W.B.R. Dog Committee.
7. All teams testing will be given fair and equal test situations. Teams will not test on the same day on previously used site.

GENERAL FORMAT - TEST SITE

Avalanche Search Test

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

WBR Avalanche Search - Dog Team Validation

Handler _____ Dog _____ Area _____ Evaluator _____ Date _____

Setup & Conditions _____ @ Ski Area _____

Test for Level _____ PASS _____ FAIL _____

	0	1	2	3	Totals	NOTES	Explanations
HANDLER							
1							Assessment of problem / conditions / handles stress
2							Initial strategy
3							Puts dog into work / search mode
4	Commands	Timing					When appropriate
5	Commands	Direction					Direction to facilitate efficient coverage
6	Commands	No override					Delicate balance of withholding commands or direction when Dog is onto something
7	Reads	conditions					Safety / wind / weather / terrain / likely spots
8	Reads	dog					Sensitive to dog's reactions -- conscious of conditions at the time
9	Reads	alerts					Reads interest vs. alert -- focus on dog -- reads subtle alerts and incorporates into searching strategy
10		Strategy--2					REVISE strategy with changing conditions
11		Restart					Into Search mode again after a find or a distraction
12		Reward					at FINDS @ End of Search
13	Area coverage & effectiveness (Handler estimate)						Ability to describe areas not covered or areas where conditions were poor and Probability of Detection was low. Report to Site Commander --- Recommend additional searching needed in specific areas.
14	Fitness	Endurance					Handler fitness-can sustain searching tempo --up & down hill
TOTALS						*Min= Max=	
DOG							
1	Commands	Response					Quick -- and still in Searching mode (e.g. direction change, leave it, etc.)
2	Work	RANGING					Natural or Directed area coverage
3	Work	intensity					Working hard and fast
4	Work	focus					Not distracted or dependent on handler
5	Work	endurance					Ability to keep going 30 - 45 minutes
6	Scent	Cone response					Catches / recognizes it / reacts toward it
7	Scent	Work to refind					"hungry" to refind it if wind changes
8	Scent	Cone to victim					Moves down the funnel with confidence
9	Scent	Pinpoint					quickly BRACKETS the source @ site
10	Alert	Readable					Obvious alert INDEPENDENT of Handler
11	Alert	Sustained					High excitement and DESIRE
12	Restart	Search more					Immediately ready to work more if directed
13	Refind	OPTIONAL					Go back to victim site and reindicate (OPTIONAL)
TOTALS						*Min= Max=	
TIME							
	start						Time starts at briefing & assessment of situation
1	1st victim @						
2	2nd victim @						Team has 20 minutes to find all victims
3	other @						
							*The number of applicable categories times 2 will be the minimum score to pass

	Trees
	Rocks
	Packs
	small articles
	LARGE articles
	TRANS CEIVERS
	PERSON
	Wind dir
	Slope dir
	Indication
	Ski
	Pole
	Wand
	Other

WASATCH BACKCOUNTRY RESCUE

Dog Team - Behavior & Control -- OVERVIEW

The purpose of these tests is to assess the suitability of an Avalanche Rescue Dog Team for placement on the WBR Callout List. In addition to SEARCHING Skills the Dog Team must be capable of getting to the search area and working in the search environment, contributing to the overall rescue potential itself and not detracting from any other search efforts.

Responding Dog Teams should be able to search under all weather conditions, and should be able to search during the night as well as during the day. The Dog Teams should be able to work regardless of distracting conditions such as noise, crowds, machinery, and the presence of other animals or humans.

The Dog Teams should be able to travel by all transportation means likely to be used in avalanche searching scenarios. Special training and testing will be done separately for operations in and around helicopters.
[see WBR...Helicopter Protocol.....]

There is an obvious overlap in these tests and the Dog will be evaluated for overall temperament throughout all other testing phases.

Should the Dog Team fail, the Team will be allowed to retest and all other testing guidelines will apply.

No more than two failures of a Dog Team will be allowed during one season.

WBR - TEST PROTOCOL for OBEDIENCE

There is an obvious overlap in these tests and the Dog will be evaluated for overall temperament throughout all other testing phases. Should the Dog Team fail, the Team will be allowed to retest and all other testing guidelines will apply.

Obedience Test -- for Handler Control, Handler Dog communication, & quick and eager response by dog to commands [voice &/or hand signals]. Test with other dogs [1 min 2 or more preferred] and unfamiliar people present. Handlers may use corrections. Testing is OFF LEAD.

INITIAL TESTING SHOULD BE DONE TO ASSESS SOCIALIZATION SKILLS AND THIS SHOULD BE DONE ON LEAD

HEEL -- The handler and dog must maneuver through a crowd and execute turns when told by the evaluators.

COME – Handler places dog in stay / wait position and walks 25 paces away – calls dog when signaled by evaluator. Dog must come directly to handler and end up within arms length of handler preferably in a “finish” position.

STAY – Handler places dog in a stay position [w/ other dogs-group stay] and remains at site for a minute or two to make sure there are not any problems that might need a correction, then retreats out of sight for 5 minutes. Other dogs may be called from group. Evaluators may provide other distractions but be no closer than 10’ to dog. The dog may sit up from down stay but cannot move more than 5’ from where it was placed. Handler returns to dog and releases dog from stay.

RECALL – Handler recalls dog from a loose group of dogs &/or people [dog not on a stay]. Dog should immediately come to handler and end up within arms length of handler preferably in a “finish” position.

HALT ON COMMAND & DROP ON RECALL – Handler sends dog out to fetch stick or ball and commands dog to “drop” as it is going out. The Dog should drop within 5’ of command. Handler recalls dog and commands dog to “drop”, the dog should drop within 5’ of command.

DIRECTION – Handler should demonstrate ability to direct Dog at least 20 feet in a designated direction then be directed to move another 10 feet in a different direction and sit.

WASATCH BACKCOUNTRY RESCUE

WBR - TEST PROTOCOL for Social Skills + Logistics & Transport

Social Skills -- The canine should be friendly with people and capable of being worked off lead. The canine is expected to be sufficiently obedience trained, to be under the handler's control at all times, and capable of being controlled by others [with leash], if necessary. The canine should respond instantly and eagerly to voice commands and hand signals while in the presence of other canines and people, and while under the duress of unusual noises and situations.

During testing, any "Dangerously Aggressive" Behavior will be grounds for disqualification [Fail & cessation of testing].

"Correctable Aggressive Tendencies" are signs of aggression that are controllable by Handler with one command. Any "Correctable Aggressive Tendencies" towards humans are grounds for disqualification.

"Correctable Aggressive Tendencies" towards other canines will preclude a Level A rating, and helicopter callouts. The Team may be rated Level B [Emergency Use Only] but must undertake training to correct the problem and retest within 6 weeks. The Team may do a Level A Avalanche Search test.

"Fearful Behavior" should be carefully evaluated as this can manifest itself in aggression. If the fearfulness inhibits the dog's ability to work or respond to commands, it will be judged a FAIL. And in any event, training should be undertaken to correct the problem.

THIS APPLIES TO LOGISTICS & TRANSPORT TESTS ALSO.

TEST PROCEDURES FOR:

DOG – DOG The candidate dog will be led up to a non-aggressive dog on a loose leash and contact will be allowed. The candidate dog will be evaluated on its actions around the other canine.

DOG – HUMAN The candidate dog will be tied/leashed and the handler will walk out of site for 5 minutes. During that time the dog is expected to be relaxed. An evaluator not known to dog will approach the dog, unhook it and walk it to the handler. The dog must show no aggression and should be controllable.

CROWD – WITHOUT other dogs The handler will walk the canine through a crowd of people and will be judged on its actions.

CROWD – WITH other dogs Same as *Without other dogs* except that unfamiliar dogs will be present within the crowd.

STRANGER INTERACTING WITH HANDLER With the canine in a sit or down stay, approximately 5' from handler, an unfamiliar person will "help" the handler on and off with a pack. The handler may tell the dog that everything is OK but there should be no aggressive or protective reaction by the dog toward "helper".

Transport—The Dog should display the ability to be placed with other canines [1 min] in the back of an open truck or snowcat, with the engine running. The handlers move to at least 25 feet away, in sight of the canines. Two strangers approach and load with the dogs. The Handlers may use a correction. The Handlers approach after 1 minute. There should be no disruptive behavior displayed by the canines.

Handler directs dog to jump onto a snowmobile with strange driver, while the engine is running, and is then towed on skis behind vehicle while the dog rides with the driver.

WBR TESTS SCORING for:
OBEDIENCE, SOCIAL SKILLS, LOGISTICS & TRANSPORT

Handler _____ Dog _____ Area _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____ Test Location _____

O B E D I E N C E 0 1 2 0=POOR 1= GOOD 2= VERY GOOD Minimum Score = 11

HEEL				COMMENTS
Start				
L				
R				
Turn 180				
Change Pace				
Halt				
COME				
STAY				
RECALL				
DROP				
DIRECTION				
Totals				

SOCIALIZATION

SCORING	Dangerously Aggressive	Correctable Aggressive Tendencies	Afraid	Not Bothered	COMMENTS
DOG - DOG	disqualified	Train-retest	?	PASS	
DOG - HUMAN	disqualified	disqualified	?	PASS	
Crowd -- People	disqualified	disqualified	?	PASS	
Crowd + Dogs	disqualified	Train-retest	?	PASS	
Handler -Helper	disqualified	Train-retest	?	PASS	
CONFINED SPACE & SNOWCAT **	disqualified	Train-retest	?	PASS	

LOGISTICS & TRANSPORT

	FAIL	CAN BE TRANSPORTED EFFECTIVELY	COMMENTS
**CONFINED SPACE			
**SNOWCAT			
SNOWMOBILE			
OTHER ?			

EVALUATION RESULTS

WBR AVALANCHE DOG TEAM VALIDATION RESULTS

Copies to: | Handler | Organization Supervisor | WBR File (for transmittal to SL County Sheriffs SAR)
 send WBR copies – (this cover sheet and copies of evaluators score sheets) to:
 Alta Snow Safety / WBR Test Results , P.O. Box 8007, Alta, UT 84092

to: _____

from: Wasatch Backcountry Rescue re: Annual Verification of Dog Team

[Handler] _____ & [Dog] _____ AREA _____

Date _____ Test location [@ area] _____

Level	[A] Operational	Passed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Failed	<input type="checkbox"/>
	[B] Emergency	Passed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Failed	<input type="checkbox"/>
	[C] Candidate	Passed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Failed	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evaluators*	[name]	[affiliation]	Pass	Fail

Individual Score Sheets attached

*Indicates Certified Evaluators. Other Handlers may also submit Validation Score Sheets.

Tested for:	Dog-Health Certificates		Certified by Area _____
	Handler meets qualifications		Certified by Area _____
	Obedience, Social & Agility		
	Avalanche Search		

PLACE TEAM ON WBR CALLOUT LIST [date] _____
 Handler callout information

Qualifies for Avalanche Dog Tag

Qualifies for Watershed Permit Dog Tag

Summary submitted by _____

Comments

WASATCH BACKCOUNTRY RESCUE

WBR DOG COMMITTEE MEMBERS

WBR Dog Committee	Organization	Work Phone #	Home Phone #	Mobile / Pager
Dan O'Connor	Alta	801-742-3333	435-647-9723	
Bruce Remington	Alta	801-742-3333	801-278-6332	
Ben Muller	Brighton	435-647-9412	435-649-7908	
Patrick Eibs	Brighton	435-647-9412	435-645-7924	
Mark Watson	Snowbird	801-521-6040 x 4217	801-942-2969	m 801-541-3443
Sue Luther	Snowbird	801-521-6040 x 4217	801-572-0189	
Shaun Shelton	Solitude	801-536-5753	801-266-2193	p 801-267-6444
Chris Harman	Solitude	801-536-5753		

WBR AVALANCHE DOG TESTING / EVALUATORS

WBR Evaluators	Organization	Work Phone #	Home Phone #	Mobile / Pager
Clark Maughan	Alta	801-742-3333	801-733-7075	
Dan O'Connor	Alta	801-521-6040 x 4217	435-647-9723	
Bruce Remington	Alta	801-742-3333	801-278-6332	
Bjorn Nilsson	Alta	801-521-6040 x 4217	801-742-2485	
Ben Meyerson	Alta	801-521-6040 x 4217	801-742-0422	
Greg Bell	Alta	801-521-6040 x 4217	801-414-7821	
Ben Muller	Brighton	435-647-9412	435-649-7908	
Patrick Eibs	Brighton	435-647-9412	435-645-7924	
Mark Watson	Snowbird	801-521-6040 x 4217	801-942-2969	m 801-541-3443
Sue Luther	Snowbird	801-521-6040 x 4217	801-572-0189	
Jim Collinson	Snowbird	801-521-6040 x 4217	801-521-6040 x4273	
Eric Fields	Snowbird	801-521-6040 x 4217	801-571-8682	
Sam Davis	Snowbird	801-521-6040 x 4217	801-484-6442	801-557-4795
Shaun Shelton	Solitude	801-536-5753	801-266-2193	p 801-267-6444
Chris Harman	Solitude	801-536-5753		
Keith Sternfels	Solitude	801-536-5753		

WASATCH BACKCOUNTRY RESCUE

CURRENT LIST OF QUALIFIED AVALANCHE DOG TEAMS 98-99 Season

Certified WBR Dog Teams as of 1/30/99	Organization	Work Phone #	Home Phone #	Mobile / Pager
Bjorn Nilsson / Jamie	Alta	801-742-3333	801-742-2485	
Clark Maughan / Stella	Alta	801-742-3333	801-733-7075	
Eric McCulley / Stella	Alta	801-742-3333	801-742-2262	
Mark Watson / Bailey	Snowbird	801-521-6040 x 4217	801-942-2969	m 801-541-3443
Jimmy Collinson / Jesse	Snowbird	801-521-6040 x 4217	801-521-6040 x4273	
Chris Harman / Ramses	Solitude	801-536-5753		
Keith Sternfels / Josey	Solitude	801-536-5753		
Greg Dolhausen / Argenta	UDOT			