

McLean County EMA

Probationary / Field Training Program Policy: Search and Rescue Division

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The purpose of this policy is to provide the requirements and stipulations for the Probationary and Field Training Programs within the Search and Rescue Division of the McLean County Emergency Management Agency.

Division Qualifications

All staff members, regardless of rank or status must:

- Be at least 18 years of age at the time of joining on probation
- Fill out an application and sign the McLean County EMA oath
- Hold a valid Illinois driver's license to drive Agency assets
- Have no felony charges or convictions or have been convicted of select misdemeanors
- Undergo and successfully pass a criminal background investigation
- Be able to perform the essential functions of the job with or without a reasonable accommodation

The Lieutenant of Administration and the Lieutenant of Search and Rescue jointly maintain the Search and Rescue Division Probation Program and the Field Training Program. The policy is supported by all EMA SAR Team members and may only be deviated from with authorization by a Lieutenant or a higher-ranking Command Staff member. The Sergeant of Training and Safety is charged with ensuring that the training requirements outlined in this policy are met for all members.

Individuals serving with the Search and Rescue Division begin their service as a Probationary Member. The purpose of the Probationary Program is to 1) develop proficiency in specific functional activities and practices; 2) form a strong working relationship with other status team members; and 3) demonstrate commitment to the Agency and support of its goals.

The Probationary Program runs for a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 12 months during which time certain performance-based skills and/or training must be completed. Successful completion of the Probationary Program in its entirety as outlined below constitutes the qualification for promotion to full membership in the Search and Rescue Division. Failure to complete the requirements within one calendar year disqualifies the Probationary Member for promotion to full membership in the Search and Rescue Division within the Agency. The timeframe and eligibility for re-application as a Probationary Member will be determined on a case by case basis by the Command Staff.

Probationary Program

The following courses have been identified as providing essential, base-knowledge required for every Probationary Member effective January 1, 2012. Unless approved by the Sergeant of Training and Safety, training courses from other agencies are non-transferable. The rationale for this is that many training courses contain content that is customized specifically for members of the McLean County Emergency Management Agency. The Sergeant of Training and Safety, in conjunction with the Lieutenant of Search and Rescue may alter the training course requirements at any time. Brief course descriptions follow each course listing.

- **Operations Security (OPSEC) Indoctrination**

Operations Security (OPSEC) addresses protecting sensitive but unclassified information that can serve as indicators about the McLean County Emergency Management Agency's missions, operations, and capabilities. OPSEC identifies Critical Information (CI) and assigns a classification to it based on a number of factors. The indoctrination familiarizes staff members with information handling protocols and classification levels. *Prerequisites: None*

- **Agency Overview**

Covers the history and evolution of Emergency Management in McLean County, the Agency's command and organizational structure, membership requirements, membership status classifications, services overview, high-level incident activation procedures, and online sources for collaboration and communication. *Prerequisites: OPSEC Indoctrination*

- **Ground Search and Rescue (GSAR)**

The Ground Search and Rescue course is the basic training course for personnel who have responsibilities to respond to a SAR incident as a field searcher. This course provides a broad overview of SAR fundamentals, lost person behavior, scope of SAR operations, SAR resources, search techniques, and search crew field operations. This course is designed to provide the training necessary for emergency management personnel to function on a SAR mission as specified in the ESDA Administrative Rule. This course is intended for all emergency responders, including police, fire, emergency management, and parks and recreation personnel, who might be involved in a search incident during the normal course of their duties. Prior SAR training or experience is not required to successfully complete this course, however basic land navigation and IS-100 are recommended. *The Ground Search and Rescue course must be accredited by the Illinois Search and Rescue Council.*

- **Basic Land Navigation (BNAV)**

This course is designed to provide the training necessary for a searcher to perform essential land navigation tasks during a search mission. This course includes map reading, compass work, and Global Positioning System (GPS) tools and builds upon classroom instruction to allow the trainee to solve a variety of land navigation problems in the field. This course is appropriate for anyone who needs navigational skills for remote locations. Due to the current infrequency of this course offering, this is required to be completed at first available offering. If no course has been offered during the probationary period, this requirement may be waived. *The Land Navigation course must be accredited by the Illinois Search and Rescue Council.*

National Incident Management System Compliance - Single Resource Level

Note: Due to the independent nature of these courses, Probationary Members are expected to complete these courses outside regular Agency training times.

- ◆ **IS-100, Introduction to Incident Command System**

This course introduces the Incident Command System (ICS) and provides the foundation for higher level ICS training. This course describes the history, features and principles, and organizational structure of the Incident Command System. It also explains the relationship between ICS and the National Incident Management System (NIMS). If this course has already been completed, a copy of the course certificate or EMI transcript is required for the Probationary Member's file. *Prerequisites: None*

- ◆ **IS-200, ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents**

IS-200 is designed to enable personnel to operate efficiently during an incident or event within the Incident Command System (ICS). IS-200 provides training on and resources for personnel who are likely to assume a supervisory position within the ICS. If this course has already been completed, a copy of the course certificate or EMI transcript is required for the Probationary Member's file. *Prerequisites: IS-100*

- ◆ **IS-700 Introduction to the National Incident Management System (NIMS)**

This course introduces NIMS and takes approximately three hours to complete. It explains the purpose, principles, key components and benefits of NIMS. The course also contains "Planning Activity" screens giving you an opportunity to complete some planning tasks during this course. The planning activity screens are printable so that you can use them after you complete the course. If this course has already been completed, a copy of the course certificate or EMI transcript is required for the Probationary Member's file. *Prerequisites: None*

- ◆ **IS-800.B Introduction to the National Response Framework (NRF)**

The course introduces participants to the concepts and principles of the National Response Framework. It covers the purpose of the National Response Framework, the response doctrine established by the National Response Framework, the roles and responsibilities of entities as specified in the National Response Framework, the actions that support national response, the response organizations used for multi-agency coordination, and how planning relates to national preparedness. If this course has already been completed, a copy of the course certificate or EMI transcript is required for the Probationary Member's. *Prerequisites: None*

◆ **IS-809 Emergency Support Function (ESF) #9 – Search and Rescue**

The National Response Framework (NRF) presents the guiding principles that enable all response partners to prepare for and provide a unified national response to disasters and emergencies – from the smallest incident to the largest catastrophe. As part of the NRF, Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) are primary mechanisms at the operational level used to organize and provide assistance. This series of courses is designed to overview each of the 15 ESFs. This course provides an introduction to Emergency Support Function (ESF) #9 Search and Rescue. *Prerequisites: None*

▪ **First Aid / CPR**

Valid (non-expired) American Heart Association Healthcare Provider CPR and First Aid certifications must be maintained in order to gain / continue membership with the Agency. Given the number of individuals within the Agency who seek out higher level medical certifications (such as First Responder or EMT), these certifications are only offered in-house if an appropriate number of students require [re]certification. Probationary Members are expected to seek out this certification within the community (with the assistance of the Sergeant of Training and Safety) should they not seek a higher level of medical certification. *Prerequisites: None*

▪ **Basic Communications - Classroom**

This classroom course covers basic two-way radio concepts, radio etiquette, net-operations, agency-specific communication information, technology-specific topics, and frequency management at small and large incidents. A review of interoperability in the state of Illinois is also conducted. *Prerequisites: Agency Overview*

Sponsorship

As a way to build a stronger relationship with members of the Search and Rescue Division, each Probationary Member is required to identify and obtain a sponsor.

Each Probationary Member must have a Command Staff member that is SAR-trained in the specific disciplines willing to sponsor his / her candidacy for promotion to membership in the SAR Division. It is important that Probationary Members build strong relationships with their sponsor so that they are comfortable sponsoring and advocating for the Probationary Member throughout the Probationary Program. Any Probationary Member who fails to obtain a sponsor will be denied candidacy for promotion to membership in the Search and Rescue Division and full membership with the Agency.

Once a Probationary member secures a sponsor, the sponsor serves as an advocate for the candidate's promotion throughout the Probationary Program. The sponsor initiates the voting process, facilitates the pre-voting discussions, solicits feedback from staff members on both strengths and areas of improvement, and works with the Sergeant of Training and Safety to verify readiness for promotion.

Voting

The voting process is the final step in a Probationary Member's candidacy for promotion to membership within the Search and Rescue Division with the McLean County Emergency Management Agency. Any Probationary Member who does not receive a majority of "yes" votes to be granted a promotion and full membership will terminate his / her association with the Agency. Re-association is considered on a case by case basis by the Command Staff.

All Search and Rescue Division members are entitled to a vote on the Probationary Member. A majority (51%) of the votes of each specialty (Ground and K-9) must be in support of the candidate's promotion to full member and change of status to that of a staff member.

All staff members base their votes for Probationary Member candidates on a defined criteria list. Each staff member takes into account skills identified by Command Staff for all team members to be successful. These include (but are not limited to) leadership, problem solving, professionalism, dedication, technical / functional expertise, and teamwork.

Once the sponsor initiates the voting process, a closed meeting will be scheduled to discuss the candidate. The candidate will not be in attendance during the meeting. The sponsor will facilitate the pre-voting discussion with all members of the Search and Rescue Division by highlighting the candidate's successes and strengths during the Probationary Program. Feedback will be solicited from staff so that everyone has a clear picture of the candidate's work. Non-confidential personnel information will be available during the meeting for each voting member to review.

Once the pre-voting discussion concludes, voting will commence. Every Search and Rescue Division staff member present may cast one vote - either "yes" or "no". If a staff member is unable to attend the closed meeting, he / she may identify a proxy to vote on their behalf.

If a positive vote is cast (51% of Ground SAR Team and 51% of K-9 Operations Team members), the Probationary Member will be promoted to full member.

Once the voting process ends, the candidate's sponsor will provide the results to the candidate along with any pertinent developmental feedback for the candidate. If staff membership is granted, paperwork will be submitted to the Director of the McLean County Emergency Management Agency for processing and equipment issuance. If staff membership is denied, the candidate must cease any further involvement with the Search and Rescue Division based on conditions specified by the Command Staff.

The vote may not be appealed and is final. Voting based on race or color, religion, gender, national origin or ancestry, age, marital status, gender identity, or sexual orientation is forbidden. Due to the rigorous nature of the work expectations for all Search and Rescue Division Staff, McLean County EMA staff members must consider if the candidate can perform the essential functions of the job with or without a reasonable accommodation when casting their vote.

Probationary Members and Deployments:

Probationary members may participate in a deployment once they complete these basic requirements:

- 1) Completion of the OPSEC Training and signed the Agency Non-Disclosure Agreement
- 2) Completion of the Agency Overview course
- 3) Completion of the GSAR course
- 4) Completion of IS-100 and IS-700

Restrictions

Probationary Members, at the discretion of the Commanding Officer, may:

- Attend open meetings
- Participate in training and exercises
- Participate in deployments

Probationary Members may not:

- Retain county-owned equipment
- Be issued an EM designator (will be issued an OPS designator instead)
- Use county radio frequencies or possess radios with transmit capabilities for any county agency in which authorization has not been obtained unless staffing an activation or training event
- Have any type of warning lighting system (blue / white) in their vehicle (unless a member of another agency - will not use lighting to respond to any Emergency Management Agency event).

Field Training Program

K-9 Operations Team

Upon successful completion of the Probationary Program and promotion to membership, the individual is granted all rights and privileges of full member and begins a Field Training Program that is to last no more than two years. This program begins on the date of promotion to membership, although individuals may begin working on the program during their Probationary period. During the Field Training Program, the member undertakes additional training to ensure that they will have a field-ready operational K-9 that is certified to industry standards within two years of their promotion to membership. The two-year time frame allows for someone to acquire a puppy at the time of their promotion to membership and have the time necessary for the K-9 to mature and achieve industry standard certification.

Promotion from probationary status to member status within the K-9 Operations Team requires that the individual meet one of the following requirements:

1. Be actively training an operational K-9 that is currently certified to industry standards (see below).
2. Be actively training a K-9 towards certification to industry standards.
3. Be actively seeking a new K-9 partner to train towards certification to industry standards. K-9 must be acquired within 12 months of promotion to K-9 Handler status within the K-9 Operations Team, or the member may revert to the position of Searcher within the Ground Search and Rescue Team at the discretion of the Search and Rescue Command Staff.

Industry standard certification is defined as certification with a reputable organization that meets industry standards for the specific discipline (area search, land cadaver, water cadaver trailing, disaster). Examples of these organizations include:

- International Police Work Dog Association (IPWDA)
- North American Police Work Dog Association (NAPWDA)
- National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR)
- National Search Dog Alliance (NSDA)
- American Mantrailing Police Work Dog Association (AMPWDA)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- State Urban Search and Rescue (SUSAR)

Other organizations may be considered on a case-by-case examination of their ability to meet industry standards for the specific discipline. These will be determined by the K-9 Operations Team Sergeant in consultation with the Lieutenant of Search and Rescue. Certification to industry standards may be replaced with an appropriate reliability test once the K-9 has achieved initial certification with one of the industry standard organizations listed above.

In addition to achieving industry standard certification, the K-9 handler must demonstrate completion of the following human skills training during this two year period:

- Crime Scene Preservation
- Scent Theory
- K-9 First Aid
- Training Logs and Report Writing

If the member fails to complete the Field Training Program within two years, the Sergeant of the K-9 Operations Team may submit a request to dismiss the member from the K-9 Operations Team for failing to meet established training requirements. The member may revert to the Ground Search and Rescue Team at the discretion of the Search and Rescue Command Staff. At no time may the Sergeant of the K-9 Operations Team submit a dismissal request for a K-9 Handler due to failure to complete a course that has not been offered.

K-9 Specific Requirements

Any K-9 that is training to become operational or to maintain their operational status must meet the following requirements:

◆ **Physical Condition of K-9**

The K-9 should be in good physical condition. This is physically demanding work, and it is not recommended to start training a K-9 older than 4 years old and no K-9 with physical restrictions regardless of age may be a member of the K-9 Operations Team. The K-9 must be capable of working in moderate to harsh terrain, working extended shifts of 12-18 hours, and working several operational periods over the course of multiple days.

The K-9 must have all current vaccinations including; DHLPP, Rabies, Bordatella (or sufficient titers), Heartworm (negative) and be on heartworm preventatives, and be on flea and tick applications. The K-9 Operations Team Sergeant is responsible for ensuring that all K-9s are current on the required vaccinations and preventatives.

◆ **Aggression**

Definition: K-9 aggression is defined as an attempted or actual unprovoked attack on another K-9 or person.

Policy: Aggressive behavior toward people shall not be considered acceptable behavior for a K-9. The K-9 must be able to tolerate other K-9s off lead without showing aggression. Additionally, the K-9 must allow another person to move it to a different location in the absence of its team partner without showing aggression.

Repercussions: In the event a K-9 demonstrates aggressive behavior at any EMA event, the following procedures will be followed:

- K-9 attacks a person: Upon an unprovoked attack, the K-9 will be dismissed from the event and the team.
- K-9 attacks another K-9: The Sergeant of the K-9 Operations Team or point of contact coordinating the event will immediately review the incident and determine if it is an isolated incident or long-term problem (known history of same and/or documented cases of aggression). If it is determined to be an isolated incident, the Sergeant of the K-9 Operations Team may allow the K-9 to continue to participate in the event. If it is determined to be a chronic problem, after consultation with the Chief and Deputy Chief, the Sergeant will advise the handler that the K-9 does not meet the aggression policy and the K-9 will be dismissed from the event and the team.

Humane Treatment of K-9s:

The K-9s training with the McLean County Emergency Management Agency will be trained and handled in a humane manner with the emphasis on positive reinforcement. Recognizing that some corrections are occasionally needed in the training of SAR K-9s, corrections will be directly related to the errant training incident and the corrective action delivered swiftly and without emotion from the trainer followed by immediately putting the K-9 back into a positive state of training. Any incident which is perceived to be abusive to a K-9 should immediately be documented and reported to the Sergeant of the K-9 Operations Team or other Command Staff member. Incidents will be reviewed on an individual basis and can be considered grounds for dismissal.