

Membership Information

Sandia Search Dogs is a volunteer non-profit organization that promotes the use of dogs as a resource in Search and Rescue (SAR). The team is based in Albuquerque, NM and has existed since January 2000. While we respond primarily to search missions in the Albuquerque area, our mission response area includes all of New Mexico. Our training areas include the Sandia and Manzano mountains predominantly, and we train six times per month, on average.

Becoming a member of a SAR dog team requires a good general fitness level, an interest in the outdoors with experience in hiking and camping, and time available to commit to training a dog and going on SAR missions. Some basic gear is required of all team members. It is team policy that members reside no farther than 30 miles outside the Albuquerque city limits in order to respond readily to both trainings and mission assignments.

Team members own their search dogs. Dogs well suited to SAR are bold, agile athletes, have high energy, are not easily discouraged, and have a pleasant attitude toward people and other dogs. They must be toy or food crazy, and 2 years old or younger when beginning their search training. A canine SAR suitability evaluation is made on all new dog candidates. Once the dog has begun SAR training, progress is evaluated with periodic tests. All dogs must pass a Mission-Ready Evaluation to be eligible to participate on SAR missions. Most dogs take about 2 years to become fully trained.

To become a member of Sandia Search Dogs, a candidate should contact our current Membership Officer listed in the Joining SSD section of our web page www.swcp.com/ssd. The Membership Officer will provide an outline of our membership requirements and the process that leads to our full new candidate interview and dog SAR suitability evaluation. Candidates must attend at least three (3) SSD trainings without their dog before becoming eligible for a new candidate interview and canine SAR evaluation. This pre-interview requirement helps the interested person decide if canine SAR is really something they wish to pursue themselves and for their dog. If our evaluation finds that a dog is not suited for SAR, the owner candidate may still be invited to join the team as a field support person with or without the intention of getting another and better suited dog. An application may then be submitted to the Membership Officer, along with a \$35 application fee. Following acceptance of a new member application, a new member orientation will be scheduled. This orientation covers the team philosophy, attendance and search gear requirements, and expectations of a dog's training progress. These requirements are written in the team Member Guide.

Once an orientation has been given to the new member, they begin their Prospective Member period, which lasts 6 months. During this time they are required to maintain a minimum of 30% attendance and procure their required gear for mission readiness. Most new members already have the required gear, or most of it, because of their previous outdoor experience. It is encouraged, and expected, that as soon as a Prospective has the required gear and passes a "pack check", they will begin participating in SAR missions. A member attains full member status after the 6 month Prospective Member period, if they have met both the attendance and the clothing-gear requirements.

Required Clothing and Gear: ¹

- Sturdy hiking boots
- Sturdy work gloves
- Head cover(s)
- Gloves and/or mittens
- Socks (and extras)
- Inner layer (basic underwear, long underwear – bottoms and tops)
- Middle layer(s) for warmth (bottoms and tops)
- Outer layer for wind and water protection (bottoms and top with hood)
- Pack (internal or external frame) to carry/hold the required gear and clothing
- Eye protection
- Food for 24 hours
- Water (2 quarts minimum)
- Knife
- Fire starter
- Orienteering Compass with 2 degree accuracy ²
- Map of search area
- Whistle
- Signal mirror (glass or mil-spec with mesh around sighting hole)
- Light source (flashlight or headlamp, plus extra batteries and replacement bulbs or multiple lights)
- Personal first aid kit
- Space blanket
- Pencil or pen and paper
- 20 ft of 1 inch tubular webbing

Note – Clothing layers must comply with Field Certification non-cotton/cotton blend clothing specifications. Bluejeans and tennis shoes are not appropriate attire for SAR missions nor most trainings.

Recommended additional items: (see also items listed in *Field Cert Study Guide*)

- Handheld Radio (128 channel minimum, 136-174 MHz narrowband/wideband)
- GPS receiver
- Shelter materials (bivy or light tent, tarp-8x10ft, etc.)
- Trail tape (orange-route flagging, pink-clue/evidence flagging (blue tape used in some areas for mantrack flagging))
- Watch

(updated 12//20/2013 kh)

¹ Gear list is based on [NM Field Certification Standards](#)

² SSD compass requirement exceeds NM Field Certification Standards.