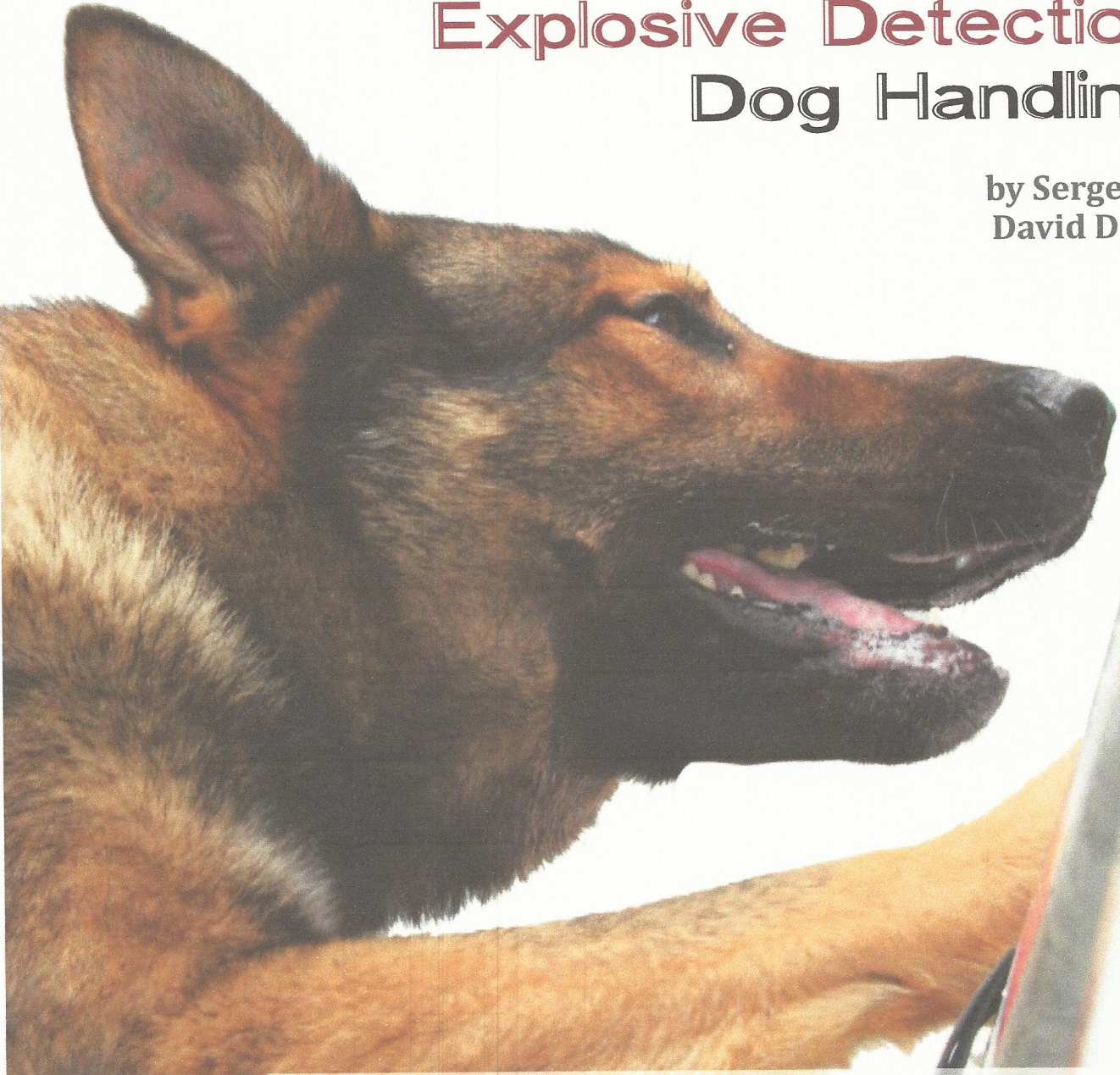




Normalization of Risk in Explosive Detection Dog Handling

by Sergeant
David Dorn

“Normalization of risk,” a common human tendency, means becoming desensitized to the risk around us and subconsciously accepting high levels of risk as being normal after continuous, repeated behavior without negative consequences.

As an officer over the past 16 years, I have progressed in my training as a Canine Handler, Canine Unit Supervisor, Handler Instructor and Canine Trainer. While working in a metropolitan city, I had the opportunity to handle multiple canines on a daily basis. I handled an explosive detection dog and then another canine for narcotic detection.

As we know, canine handlers are in one of the highest risk positions in law enforcement, and as we know, very few departments spend the extra time and finances on giving them the training to handle those increased tasks.

The potential for a safety mishap is always looming in this career field. Handling a canine is much like playing a contact sport. Speed, fitness, training and awareness are necessary traits to identify, prevent and correct safety mishaps.

As you look at your own program you should consider some of the following guidelines:

Training

Explosive detection dog handlers should receive initial and ongoing specialized training from bomb squad technicians and from specialized schools in the recognition and safe handling of explosives. Canine handlers should never handle, store, transport or use as training aids any detonators, blasting caps, igniters and other initiating devices.

Safety Equipment

There should be a variety of tools and pieces of equipment with which your explosive detection dog handler should become familiar and possess as a canine handler. Much of this equipment is directly involved with safety for both people and canines. Your day-to-day equipment is vital for safe and effective searching.

For example, a search-type mirror, photocell safe light and a search-type equipment vest instead of a duty belt holster should be utilized to minimize knocking around tight areas and other potential hazards. A hearing piece with radio mic should be utilized instead of a handheld radio and instead of mic cord devices. Wear protective leather or latex gloves, or other non-static material gloves. Uniform material should be cotton instead of nylon or poly material due to potential static buildup.

Safety Awareness

As you perform daily operations, think of potential safety hazards from the perspective of a person with a dog moving around. You will encounter tripping hazards, hazardous fluids and objects, electrical devices and other potential hazards that may harm you or your dog. Other dogs, surprises or things likely to startle the dog may take the dog off its task of searching.

These areas should be pointed out to other canine teams and EOD technicians and should be taken into consideration prior to, or while you are conducting your sweep/search.

Deployment

Some important things to keep in mind when responding to calls for service with an explosive detection dog:

A. The canine handler and service dog should respond to a request for service and should meet with the requesting party or his/her designee.



■ An explosive detection dog handler should receive initial and ongoing training.

B. The handler should gather information on the specific circumstances and nature of the anticipated search.

■ Based on the information received, the handler should determine if and how the service dog will be utilized.

C. The handler should ask for additional assistance as necessary, in accordance with department policy and procedures.

■ While the service dog is in search, other officers should not be searching and should remain clear.

■ Officers should make every effort to ensure that they do not contaminate the search area with their own scent or that of other persons or substances.



■ A good search pattern is part of a systematic search.

D. The handler should determine the best search pattern or technique to be utilized.

■ The search should be conducted in a systematic order (such as clockwise or exteriors then interiors) to ensure that all areas have been cleared.

■ The handler should use all wind currents to his/her advantage.

i. Generally, this will be downwind.

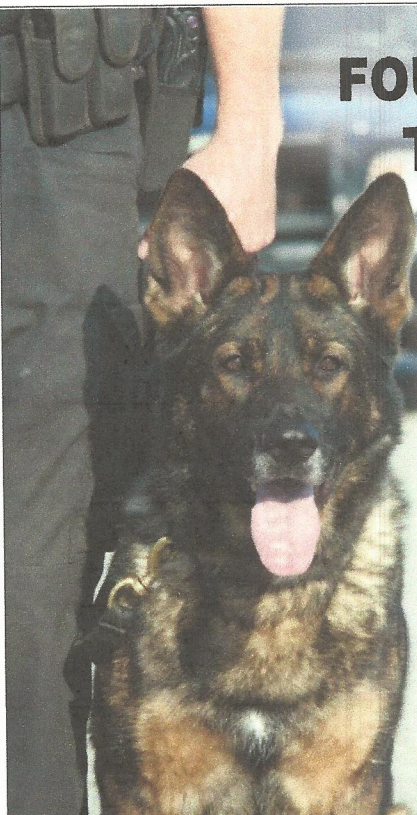
E. The handler should inspect the area for items which might be a hazard to the service dog (i.e. glass, loose electrical, rat bait & traps, etc.)

F. Spotters (as defined in industry standards) should be utilized as available.

G. The handler must advise the requesting party of any "alerts" or "interest" from the service dog.

H. The handler should assist other departmental personnel in conducting additional searches of the area for other potential items and or devices not found by the service dog.

Spotter: An officer or trained person who assists the canine team by observing the search in progress, ensuring that the canine handler presents all areas during the search is alert to indications from the service dog, and potential hazards that might have been missed by the handler.



**FOUND SOMETHING
THAT WORKS AS HARD AS I DO...**

ZYMOX®
LP3 ENZYME SYSTEM

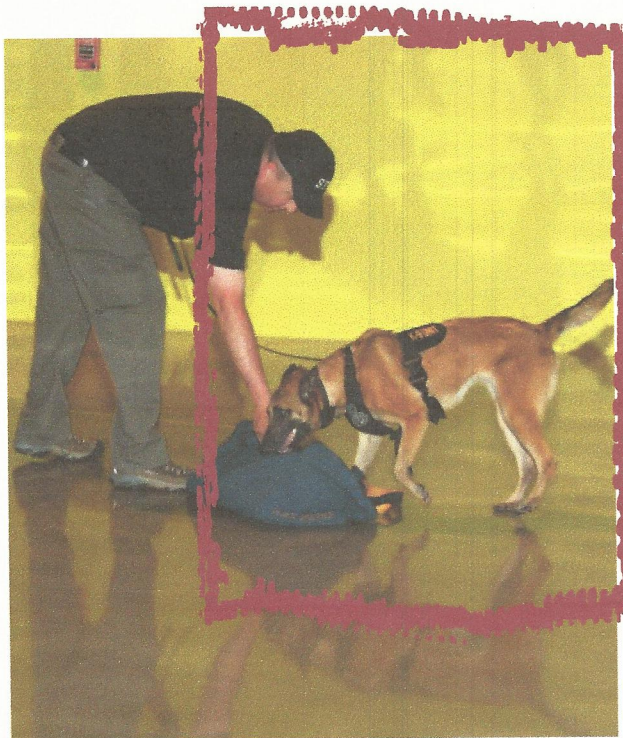
for **Chronic
Ear & Skin
Conditions**

Works When Antibiotics Fail



A Full Line of Enzymatic Dermatology & Oral Products
Call 888-752-5487 or click www.zymox.com to find out where to buy





■ The explosive detection dog should not be used to clear a suspicious device.

Specific Types of Searches

I. Vehicle Searches

- If there is traffic, the search should be done on-leash
- The explosive detection dog will search the exterior areas of the vehicle.
 - i. If the service dog gives a positive response, the handler must advise the persons requesting the search and have the special technicians search the exterior and interior of the vehicle.

J. Residential Searches

- Ensure there is either a valid search warrant or consent.
 - i. Written consent is preferable.

K. Persons

- The explosive detection dog team should be trained and utilized to conduct sweeps of persons and their property.

L. Bomb Threats

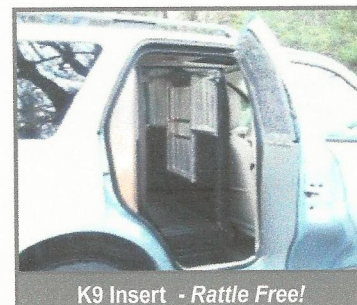
- When a specific time is designated for the device to detonate, the search should be suspended 30 min-

KUSTOM KRATES®

K9 officers with our products say there's no comparison!



K9 Eagle



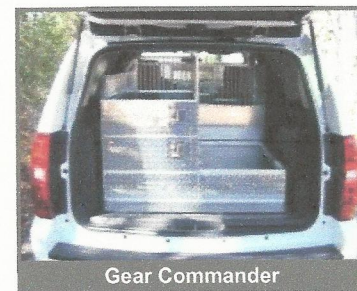
K9 Insert - Rattle Free!



K-9 Special Our most popular unit



- Tig welded for maximum strength
- Separate units that latch together
- Locking doors and drawers



Gear Commander

Mark Natinsky

www.KUSTOMKRATES.com

512-272-9651

utes prior to that time. The search should then resume no sooner than 30 minutes after the designated time.

M. Bomb Sweeps

- Conducted upon request or on a random basis. Should be conducted utilizing a spotter and possible EOD technician

Suspicious Devices

The explosive detection dog should not be used to clear a suspicious device. The explosive detection dog team should however, be used to search for a possible secondary device.

Suspected Device: An object, package, vehicle, etc. which, by its very appearance, is suspicious. Objects (including vehicles) which are lopsided; unevenly weighted; have handwritten notes attached; improper spelling or generic graphics; leaks or stains; protruding wires, string, tape, etc. are "suspected devices." The location of an object (i.e. an unattended package hidden behind a plant, under a table, or in a corner; or an unattended car parked where it does not belong) will contribute to the overall suspiciousness of an object. An unattended object, absent any other criteria, will not in and of itself, create a "suspected device."

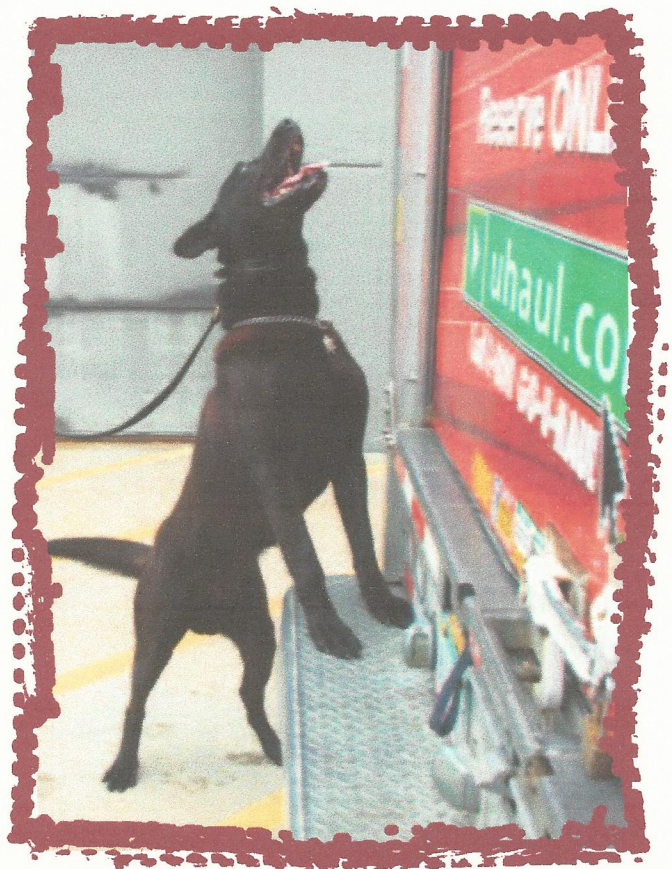
Hazardous Materials

While handling any potential hazardous materials (training aids included) in canine operations, wear the appropriate protective equipment. Do not allow the canine the opportunity to ingest anything harmful (which is anything other than their dog food and water). Inspect areas of hazards prior to canine use.

Explosives Used in Training

When working around explosives, due to the inherent dangers involved, safety is imperative. The explosives used in training are real, and have been specifically selected because they represent the types of explosives available and used in actual devices. Canine handlers should never handle, store, transport and use as training aids any detonators, blasting caps, igniters and other initiating devices. Lack of, or non-compliance to industry standard safety measures may result in damage to property, bodily injury or even death.

Sensitivity: This is based on the degree of susceptibility to stimulation. Some explosives or explosive devices are more sensitive than others. Which means care must be taken with all bomb-making materials, since you are never sure what was used until the bomb has been disarmed.



■ Carefully re-evaluate the risk we accept.

Handling of Explosives

Canine handlers who work with explosives must be trained and qualified in the tasks they will perform, including the handling of explosive training aids. Explosives are hazardous and must be strictly controlled. The smallest quantity of explosives should be removed from the storage area and only for the shortest period of time necessary to support Canine Training and Canine Odor Recognition. By limiting the quantity of explosives and the time out of the storage facility, you limit some of the hazards. When using large amounts of training material EOD personnel should be utilized. When storing and transporting explosives remember the sensitivity of the material and use industry approved storage and transport containers which limit heat, shock and friction.

NOTE: When handling explosives, gloves should be worn at all time to prevent several different types of contamination. Barriers should also be used when planting an aid in any location.

Barrier: Any common type of material which will keep the training aid from coming into direct contact with the environment surfaces.

Remember Your Blast Injuries

Primary Injuries are caused by the blast itself. Because water is non-compressible and human organs are made mostly water, these are not normally as affected by the blast as the organs that are com-

pressible. Therefore, the primary targets are the air-filled organs: Ears, Lungs, Gastrointestinal and Central Nervous System.

Secondary Blast Injuries deal with the individual being struck by flying debris. This has a strong potential for lethality. The most common form of shrapnel injury is from pipe bombs. Causing contusions, punctures and lacerations. Other injuries to include: crushing, fractures and breaks, cardiac arrest, thermal-fireball-thermal burns and more.

The closer you are to the explosion, the more damage to your body. Also, the larger the quantity of explosives the higher the pressure and the further the blast potential.

In Closing

The lesson for us is to make it a practice to carefully reevaluate the risk we accept as normal or mundane and to build in a margin for error, create and follow our written procedures, and provide and use our training. Managers and supervisors need to be watchful of the tendency of employees

to "normalize" risks and must implement robust management and supervisory controls to prevent this from occurring in all types of field operations. We also have to look out for one another and get beyond the apprehension of correcting our peers when we see them engaging or preparing to engage in behaviors that may hurt them or others. ■

About the Author:

David Dorn is a Sergeant for the San Francisco Sheriff's Department, and has worked in law enforcement for over 16 years, with 14 of those years in the K-9 unit. He currently handles, trains and supervises the K-9 Unit, which he implemented in 1998.

Today, he trains and consults other agencies in implementing, managing and maintaining their agency's canine units. Dorn has participated in over 3,000 individual canine searches. He also works with local dog rescue groups, evaluating, consulting and assisting in the placement of canines which meet the requirements and standards to be Law Enforcement Service Dogs.

Any questions can be emailed to: dorn@k9stac.com.



TRIPWIRE
TRIPWIRE OPERATIONS GROUP
"PROUDLY OWNED AND OPERATED BY FIRST RESPONDERS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS."

888.330.7015

K-9 TRAINING · HME COURSES · EXPLOSIVE SALES
INERT TRAINING PRODUCTS

WWW.TRIPWIREOPS.ORG

TRIPWIRE OPERATIONS GROUP

f t in YouTube