

Immediate Area Search

Scope

This document sets out the requirement for canine search, where circumstances are such that areas, not considered to be collapsed or partially collapsed structures, require to be searched. These circumstances are termed ‘Immediate Area Searches’ (IAS).

The requirement for an IAS capability is due in part to the concept of operations for the National Resilience assets, which requires an effective search and rescue capability for collapsed structures AND heavy transport incidents. It is also a consequence of the many types of incident that the USAR assets may respond to and the varied environments in which these incidents may occur.

Definitions

The definition of Immediate Area Search is important as there are training and assessment consequences attached to such a definition. Canines, operating as part of National Resilience, will be expected to be competent to undertake IAS and will be trained and assessed whilst undertaking collapsed/partially collapsed structure searches in accordance with this requirement.

Definition of Immediate Area

An Immediate Area is, “*The area within the Inner Cordon of the incident, as defined by the Fire & Rescue Service in consultation with representatives of the other emergency services*”.

The use of the Inner Cordon to define the boundary of the ‘immediate area’ has the advantage of limiting the potential geographical size of the area as well as making it an area to which the FRS can control access and therefore clear of non-essential personnel if this is necessary to assist the search process.

Examples of the Immediate Area include;

- An area extending to 100m from the collapsed structure or transport incident
- Debris covered streets, car parks and areas of hard-standing
- Rail tracks including embankments and cuttings
- Motorway verges, embankments and cuttings
- Gardens adjacent to collapsed buildings

This list is not exhaustive as the location of collapsed/partially structures or heavy transport incidents cannot be predetermined. However, in order to provide further guidance, a definition of Open Area is also provided. The searching by canines of open areas is not part of the role of National Resilience assets and is therefore out of scope.

Date	Status	Document Number	Version	Page
August 2008	Complete	ND_USAR_SOP_DOG005	1.0	Page 1 of 2

Definition of Open Area

An Open Area is, “An area that lies outside of the inner cordon of an incident”.

In these circumstances, it is likely that the Police will manage the search process, using canine teams from a variety of sources, both professional and volunteer. The canine teams that support the Police in locating missing and vulnerable persons over large geographical areas, operate to different standards, which do not encompass the high risks and hazards that may be encountered within the inner cordon. Examples of Open Areas include:

- Woodland and forests
- Farmland or cultivated grassland
- Parks
- Mountain or moorland
- Extensive sand dunes or mudflats.

Canine search of these areas is out of scope for USAR and canine teams not competent or willing to search these areas will not be debarred from being National Resilience (USAR) assets. However, if individual handlers, supported by their FRS, wish to undertake open area searches **and this does not detract from their primary role of USAR**, they may consider undertaking open area searches.

Immediate Area Operations

At incidents involving collapsed/partially collapsed structures and heavy transport collisions the canine teams searching the immediate area can support the incident commander in two specific ways, namely:

Positive Searching

Where there is positive intelligence that persons are missing, an Immediate Area search by canine teams can cover a large area quickly with a high confidence that any of those missing persons within the immediate area will be located.

Negative Searching

Where there is no information or contradictory intelligence that persons are missing, an Immediate Area search by canine teams can confirm with a high probability that no missing persons are within the area of search and that the area can be given a low priority when planning further searches.

For specific guidance as to the conduct of Immediate Area searches, refer to “SOP_DOG008_Conduct of Immediate Area Searches”.

Author – Dave Dickson

Date	Status	Document Number	Version	Page
August 2008	Complete	ND_USAR_SOP_DOG005	1.0	Page 2 of 2