


Canines

310.1 POLICY HEADER

Original Effective Date:	Revised Date:
September 1, 2021	July 14, 2024
Authorization:  Jason Haberman Chief of Police	

310.2 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes guidelines for the use of a Bloodhound to augment law enforcement services in the community, including but not limited to locating individuals, determining paths of travel, and community outreach. This policy shall only apply to Bloodhounds specialized in scent discriminate trailing. This policy does not apply to canines trained in apprehension, drug detection, or explosives detection. The attached Bloodhound Request Matrix shall be utilized when receiving a deployment request from an outside agency.

310.3 POLICY

It is the policy of the Mt. Lebanon Police Department that teams of handlers and canines meet and maintain the appropriate proficiency to effectively and reasonably carry out legitimate law enforcement objectives.

310.4 ASSIGNMENT

Canine teams should be assigned to the Patrol Services Unit to function in a patrol capacity at the discretion of the Watch Commander.

310.5 CANINE COORDINATOR

The canine coordinator shall be appointed by and directly responsible to the Patrol Services Deputy Chief of Police or the authorized designee.

The responsibilities of the coordinator include but are not limited to:

- (a) Reviewing all canine use reports to ensure compliance with policy and to identify training issues and other needs of the program.
- (b) Maintaining a liaison with the vendor kennel.
- (c) Maintaining a liaison with command staff and functional supervisors.

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- (d) Maintaining a liaison with other agency canine coordinators.
- (e) Maintaining accurate records to document canine activities.
- (f) Recommending and overseeing the procurement of equipment and services for the teams of handlers and canines.
- (g) Scheduling all canine-related activities.
- (h) Ensuring the canine teams are scheduled for regular training to maximize their capabilities.
- (i) Ensuring that a canine trainer conducts and approves an evaluation of the canine unit in accordance with the appropriate standards as required by 37 Pa. Code § 281.

310.5.1 REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

The canine coordinator shall develop and maintain a list of equipment required for each canine team.

This list should include but not be limited to:

- (a) Collars.
- (b) Leashes.
- (c) Muzzles.
- (d) Food/water bowls.
- (e) Grooming supplies.
- (f) Exercise/training equipment.

310.6 REQUESTS FOR CANINE TEAMS

Patrol Services Unit members are encouraged to request the use of a canine. Requests for a canine team from department units outside of the Patrol Services Unit should be reviewed by the Watch Commander.

310.6.1 OUTSIDE AGENCY REQUESTS BOTH ON AND OFF DUTY

Due to the limited availability of scent discriminate bloodhounds and the unique service they provide, this policy recognizes the potential for a high number of requests from outside agencies at the local, state, and federal levels. All requests for canine assistance from outside agencies must be approved by the on duty Watch Commander and are subject to the following:

- (a) Canine teams shall not be used for any assignment that is not consistent with this policy.
- (b) The canine handler shall have the authority to decline a request for any specific assignment that they deem unsuitable.
- (c) It shall be the responsibility of the canine handler to coordinate operations with agency personnel in order to minimize the risk of unintended injury.
- (d) It shall be the responsibility of the canine handler to complete all necessary reports or as directed.

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- (e) This policy recognizes that in many cases, time can play a critical role in whether a search will be successful. An immediate response to the scene can play an important role in quickly locating endangered individuals and missing persons/children. Watch Commanders shall follow the [Bloodhound Request Matrix](#) when receiving requests from outside agencies for both on and off duty requests.

310.7 CRIMINAL RELATED DEPLOYMENT GUIDELINES

A canine may be used to locate a suspect if the canine handler reasonably believes that the individual has committed or was attempting to commit a criminal offense. A canine can be used to actively track a suspect, determine paths of travel from crime scenes to better assist in identifying suspects, identify pick up locations, help establish links between suspects and crime scenes, and provide negative alerts. This policy refers strictly to scent discriminate Bloodhounds not trained in apprehension. The canine handler shall have the discretion to deploy the canine based on the totality of the circumstances involving the crime, contamination, and nature of the offense. When the canine is deployed for a track, the following guidelines apply:

- (a) Deployments shall be conducted on-leash.
- (b) Unless otherwise directed by a supervisor, assisting members should take direction from the handler in order to minimize interference with the canine.
- (c) The canine handler shall be responsible for requesting additional assets or manpower based on the circumstances of the deployment if needed.
- (d) Officers may be requested by the canine handler to carry additional items during the track such as medical supplies, fresh water, and extra equipment.
- (e) This policy recognizes that in many cases, time can play a critical role in whether a search will be successful. An immediate response to the scene can often play a crucial role in quickly locating endangered individuals and missing persons/children. Watch Commanders shall abide by the *Bloodhound Request Matrix* for criminal related deployments for both on and off duty requests by the Mt. Lebanon Police Department or outside agencies.
- (f) The powerful sense of smell allows the Bloodhound at times to follow trails which can span many miles over multiple terrain types. Based on the unique nature of the Bloodhound and propensity for extended trails which may take several hours, this policy recognizes that a modified uniform may be necessary at times based on the weather conditions, lighting, terrain, time frame, and other factors determined by the canine handler.

310.7.1 PREPARATION FOR CRIMINAL RELATED DEPLOYMENTS

Prior to the use of a canine to search for any suspect, the canine handler and/or the supervisor on-scene should carefully consider all pertinent information reasonably available at the time. The information should include but is not limited to:

- (a) The nature and seriousness of the suspected offense.
- (b) Whether violence or weapons were used or are anticipated.
- (c) The degree of resistance or threatened resistance, if any, the suspect has shown.

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- (d) The potential for injury to officers or the public caused by the suspect if the canine is not utilized.
- (e) The potential for the suspect to escape or flee if the canine is not utilized.
- (f) Whether a suspect is potentially armed shall not be the sole reason for determining whether a track will be conducted.

It is the canine handler's responsibility to evaluate each situation and determine whether the use of a canine is appropriate and reasonable. The canine handler shall have the authority to decline the use of the canine whenever they deem deployment is unsuitable. The canine handler may request additional manpower or resources based on the nature of the crime, terrain, and pertinent information related to the target to safely perform a track.

Supervisors shall consult the canine handler and take into account their training, knowledge, experience, and opinions when assessing specific situations. A supervisor who is sufficiently apprised of the situation may prohibit deploying the canine.

Unless otherwise directed by a supervisor, assisting members should take direction from the handler in order to minimize interference with the canine.

310.7.2 REPORTING DEPLOYMENTS

Handlers should document canine deployments in an RMS report as well as canine records keeping system.

Any unintended bite or injury caused by a canine, whether on- or off-duty, shall be promptly reported to the canine coordinator. Unintended bites or injuries caused by a canine should be documented in an administrative report. If an individual alleges an injury, either visible or not visible, a supervisor shall be notified and both the individual's injured and uninjured areas shall be photographed as soon as practicable after first tending to the immediate needs of the injured party. Photographs shall be retained as evidence in accordance with current department evidence procedures.

The canine is exempt from impoundment for a bite as specified in 3 P.S. § 459-502.

310.8 NON-CRIMINAL RELATED DEPLOYMENT GUIDELINES

Canines may be used to track or search for non-criminals (e.g., lost children, individuals who may be disoriented or in need of medical attention). When the canine is deployed for a track the following guidelines apply:

- (a) Deployments shall be conducted on-leash.
- (b) Unless otherwise directed by a supervisor, assisting members should take direction from the handler in order to minimize interference with the canine.
- (c) Officers may be requested by the canine handler to carry additional items during the track such as medical supplies, fresh water, and extra equipment.

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- (d) Throughout the deployment, if appropriate, the handler may periodically give verbal assurances that the canine will not bite or hurt the individual and encourage the individual to make him/herself known.
- (e) This policy recognizes that in many cases, time can play a critical role in whether a search will be successful. An immediate response to the scene can often play a crucial role in quickly locating endangered individuals and missing persons/children. Watch Commanders shall abide by the *Bloodhound Request Matrix* for non-criminal related deployments for both on and off duty requests by the Mt. Lebanon Police Department or outside agencies.
- (f) The powerful sense of smell allows the Bloodhound at times to follow trails which can span many miles over multiple terrain types. Based on the unique nature of the Bloodhound and propensity for extended trails which may take several hours, this policy recognizes that a modified uniform may be necessary at times based on the weather conditions, lighting, terrain, time frame, and other factors determined by the canine handler.

310.9 HANDLER SELECTION

The minimum qualifications for the assignment of canine handler include:

- (a) An officer who is currently off probation.
- (b) Residing in an adequately fenced single-family residence (minimum 5-foot-high fence with locking gates).
- (c) In lieu of a fenced yard, a properly enclosed run/kennel shall be maintained on the property.
- (d) Reside within a distance consistent with the Mt. Lebanon Police Department Collective Bargaining Agreement.
- (e) Agreeing to be assigned to the position for a minimum of five years.

310.10 HANDLER RESPONSIBILITIES

The canine handler shall ultimately be responsible for the health and welfare of the canine and shall ensure that the canine receives proper nutrition, grooming, training, medical care, affection, and living conditions.

The canine handler will be responsible for the following:

- (a) Except as required during appropriate deployment, the handler shall not expose the canine to any foreseeable and unreasonable risk of harm.
- (b) The handler shall maintain all department equipment under their control in a clean and serviceable condition.
- (c) When not in service, the handler shall ensure that the canine vehicle is secured.
- (d) When a handler is off-duty for an extended number of days, the assigned canine vehicle should be stored at the Mt. Lebanon Police Department facility.

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- (e) Handlers shall permit the canine coordinator to conduct on-site inspections of affected areas of their homes as well as their canine vehicles to verify that conditions and equipment conform to this policy.
- (f) Any changes in the living status of the handler that may affect the lodging or environment of the canine shall be reported to the canine coordinator as soon as possible.
- (g) When off-duty, the canine shall be in a kennel provided by the Municipality at the home of the handler. When a canine is kenneled at the handler's home, the gate shall be secured with a lock.
- (h) The canine is be permitted to socialize in the home with the handler's family and under the direct supervision of the handler.
- (i) Under no circumstances will the canine be lodged at another location unless approved by the canine coordinator or Watch Commander.
- (j) When off-duty, the handler shall not involve the canine in any law enforcement activity unless approved in advance by the canine coordinator or Watch Commander.
- (k) Whenever a canine handler is off-duty for an extended number of days, it may be necessary to temporarily relocate the canine. In those situations, the handler shall give reasonable notice to the canine coordinator so that appropriate arrangements can be made.
- (l) Maintaining a liaison with the vendor kennel.
- (m) Maintaining a liaison with command staff and functional supervisors.
- (n) Maintaining a liaison with other agency canine coordinators.
- (o) Maintaining accurate records to document canine activities.
- (p) Recommending and overseeing the procurement of equipment and services for the teams of handlers and canines.
- (q) Scheduling all canine-related activities.
- (r) Ensuring the canine team is scheduled for regular training to maximize their capabilities.

310.10.1 CANINE IN PUBLIC AREAS

The canine should be kept on a leash when in areas that allow access to the public. Exceptions to this rule would include specific law enforcement operations for which the canine is trained.

- (a) A canine shall not be left unattended in any area to which the public may have access.
- (b) When the canine vehicle is left unattended, all windows and doors shall be secured in such a manner as to prevent unauthorized access to the canine. The handler shall also ensure that the unattended vehicle remains inhabitable for the canine.

310.11 HANDLER COMPENSATION

The canine handler shall be available for call-out under conditions specified by the canine coordinator.

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The canine handler shall be compensated for time spent in the care, feeding, grooming, and other needs of the canine in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), and according to the terms of the collective bargaining agreement (29 USC § 207).

310.12 CANINE INJURY AND MEDICAL CARE

In the event that a canine is injured, or there is an indication that the canine is not in good physical condition, the injury or condition will be reported to the canine coordinator or Watch Commander as soon as practicable and appropriately documented.

All medical attention shall be rendered by the designated canine veterinarian, except during an emergency where treatment should be obtained from the nearest available veterinarian. All records of medical treatment shall be maintained in the handler's personnel file.

310.13 TRAINING

Before assignment in the field, each canine team shall be trained and certified to meet current nationally recognized standards or other recognized and approved certification standards established by the Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission (MPOETC). Cross-trained canine teams or those canine teams trained exclusively for the detection of narcotics and/or explosives also shall be trained and certified to meet current nationally recognized standards or other recognized and approved certification standards established by the MPOETC for their particular skills (37 Pa. Code § 281).

The canine coordinator shall be responsible for scheduling periodic training for all department members in order to familiarize them with how to conduct themselves in the presence of department canines. Because canines may be exposed to dangerous substances such as opioids, as resources are available, the canine coordinator should also schedule periodic training for the canine handlers about the risks of exposure and treatment for it.

All canine training shall be conducted while on-duty unless otherwise approved by the canine coordinator or Watch Commander.

310.13.1 CONTINUED TRAINING

Each canine team shall thereafter be recertified to a current nationally recognized standard or other recognized and approved certification standards on an annual basis. Additional training considerations are as follows:

- (a) Canine teams should receive training as defined in the current contract with the Mt. Lebanon Police Department canine training provider.
- (b) Canine handlers are encouraged to engage in additional training with approval of the canine coordinator.
- (c) To ensure that all training is consistent, no handler, trainer, or outside vendor is authorized to train to a standard that is not reviewed and approved by the Department.
- (d) The team should train an average of 16 hours a month.

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310.13.2 TRAINING RECORDS

All canine training records shall be maintained in the canine handler's and the canine's training file. The canine handler shall keep records of all K-9 training.

310.13.3 FAILURE TO SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE MONTHLY TRAINING FOR MPOETC

Any canine team that fails to complete monthly training requirements shall be required to reschedule for the next available training session. Any canine team that continues to fail to meet monthly training requirements will result in a mandatory evaluation prior to being deployed in the field (37 Pa. Code § 281).

310.13.4 ADDITIONAL MPOETC TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Each canine team shall meet the monthly maintenance training requirements established by MPOETC which includes but is not limited to the following (37 Pa. Code § 281):

- (a) Review of basic and specialty skills
- (b) Review use of force decision-making by the handler

310.13.5 RETENTION OF RECORDS

All records shall be retained for a period consistent with the requirements of the established records retention schedule but in no event less than five years following the end of the canine team's service with the Department (37 Pa. Code § 281).

310.13.6 BASIC TRAINING PROVISIONS

Basic training prior to conducting police operations shall include:

- (a) Basic working dog skills (e.g., temperament, obedience, apprehension).
- (b) Applicable specialty skills (e.g., patrol, scent, tracking).
- (c) Team training with the assigned handler.

Following completion of basic training, the canine team shall be evaluated and approved by a police canine trainer operating with the approval of an organization listed in 37 Pa. Code § 281.

Attachments

Form 426 - Bloodhound Request Matrix.pdf



Mt. Lebanon Police Department

Bloodhound Request Matrix



Policy 310 Canine (Bloodhound) recognizes that in many cases, time can play a critical role in whether a search will be successful. An immediate response to the scene is crucial in quickly locating endangered individuals and missing persons/children. The On Duty Watch Commander shall follow the attached Canine Request Matrix for both on and off duty Bloodhound requests by MLPD or outside agencies. This matrix allows for a rapid response to non-criminal events which enhances the ultimate success of a trail and recovery of a missing/endangered individual or child. If the following criteria are met and the requesting agency is in SHACOG, the On Duty Watch Commander can authorize immediate deployments for both on and off duty requests for a Bloodhound made by MLPD or outside agencies.

1. _____ Is the event criminal in nature?
2. _____ Did the target make threats of violence towards Law Enforcement?
3. _____ Was the target in possession of a weapon when he/she was last seen?
4. _____ Does the requesting agency have an available Bloodhound?

If the answer to the above 4 questions is NO and the requesting agency is in SHACOG, the On Duty Watch Commander can authorize an immediate Bloodhound response with no additional approval.

If all the above criteria are not met, the DUTY OFFICER shall be contacted in reference to the request for approval.

**SHACOG AGENCIES*

Baldwin Borough, Baldwin Township, Bethel Park, Brentwood, Castle Shannon, Dormont, Elizabeth Township, Findlay, Heidelberg, Jefferson Hills, Moon Township, Mt. Oliver, Peters Township, Pleasant Hills, Robinson Township, Scott Township, South Fayette, South Park, Upper St. Clair, West Mifflin, Whitehall.