

**FEMA US&R RESPONSE SYSTEM**  
**Position Description**  
**CANINE SEARCH SPECIALIST**

The Canine Search Specialist is responsible for performing the search function of the task force incident operation. The Canine Search Specialist reports directly to the Search Team Manager.

**Description of Duties**

The Canine Search Specialist is responsible for:

- Searching structures in US&R environments or other locations indicated in the mission assignment using appropriate canine search equipment and techniques.
- Documenting locations of alerts and, if possible, triaging the status of victims for rescue.
- Adhering to all safety procedures.
- Cooperating with and assisting other search and rescue resources.
- Accountability, maintenance, and minor repairs for all issued equipment.
- Performing additional tasks or duties as assigned during a mission.

**Position Requirements and Criteria**

Individuals who meet the following requirements and criteria will be eligible to become Canine Search Specialists in the FEMA US&R Response System. The intent of these requirements is to select handlers fully capable of providing the search techniques and tactics required in the urban disaster environment. The requirements and criteria for the position are identified in the following categories:

Knowledge  
Skills  
Abilities

**Knowledge**

1. Practical knowledge of general search strategy and tactics, including:
  - "Probability of Detection" analysis.
  - Victim behavior patterns in various situations.
  - Search pattern selection criteria including terrain, structures, wind, weather, and air circulation characteristics.
  - Search Team organization and operational procedures.
  - Understanding the capabilities and limitations of technical and electronic search equipment.
  - Understanding general rescue tactics and strategy.
2. Practical knowledge of the technical aspects of search theory, including:
  - Map, compass, and GPS techniques.
  - Ability to accurately sketch a search area.
  - Ability to apply and interpret search area marking techniques for perimeters, alert areas, hazards, etc.
  - Understand search area sectoring.
  - Recognize and identify victim location clues.
  - Practical knowledge of night search techniques including increased hazard awareness and applicable air circulation characteristics.
3. Practical knowledge of the theory and techniques of searching collapsed structures, including:
  - Recognizing and identifying hazards associated with structural collapse and its environment.
  - Structural features and conditions that contribute to a high probability of victim survival in a collapsed structure.
  - Understanding the need for flexibility and coordination during multiple search operations.
4. Knowledgeable with and able to provide first aid for canines.

5. Must have completed the FEMA Canine Search Specialist Course.
6. Must be proficient with basic rope techniques outlined in Rescue System 1.

### **Skills**

1. Practical ability to apply search tactics, strategy, and procedures at collapse sites, including:
  - Understanding of US&R mission operational procedures.
  - Understanding of the size-up and reconnaissance considerations of an affected area.
  - Understanding of specific size-up and reconnaissance considerations of an assigned work site.
  - Understanding of US&R equipment and tools utilization.
  - Ability to integrate with local resources and other teams.
2. Experience as a task dog handler/trainer (police, SAR, guide, etc.).
3. Understanding of canine search operations including team size, check and recheck procedures, and observer responsibilities.

### **Abilities**

1. Able to conduct search activities in an adverse environment, including:
  - Awareness of the hazards associated with various disaster search environments.
  - Able to function safely at heights and on or around rubble. Have experience and training in personal safety in confined spaces, below-grade, and compromised conditions.
  - Able to perform as a secondary observer.
  - Understand the parameters of the work time limitations for canines and determine rotation periods.
2. Must be competent in canine search handling skills, to include:
  - Must have a close rapport and effective working relationship with the canine.
  - Must be able to read the canine's alerts and indications of areas of interest.
  - Must be able to work canines off lead at a distance and/or out of sight.
  - Able to direct canine into voids, tunnels, heights, or restricted spaces.
  - Must have a good knowledge of the capabilities and limitation of the canine.