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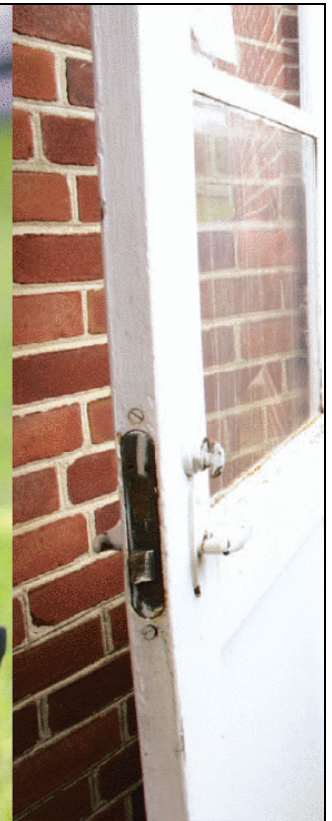
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Typically, a patrol-orientation program includes (clockwise from left) area search, building search, and narcotics sniffs, among other skills.



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Training
doesn't stop
when K-9
school ends —
it's just
beginning.

K-9 PATROL ORIENTATION



BY RODNEY SPICER

EVERY NEW K-9 TEAM needs a structured training program — just as every new police recruit fresh from basic academy needs a field-training program. After basic K-9 training and certification are complete, the initial patrol deployment period — known as patrol orientation — is a critical learning time for the K-9 team. This introduction to the street transfers the associations the K-9 has learned to a new environment and different times of day. A K-9 must always be prepared and know that a scenario can and will happen at any time. The dog must learn and understand the new associations and situations he will encounter.

Training Set-Up

Before patrol orientation can begin, the newly-assigned K-9 team typically goes through basic K-9 school, which can include taking the police service dog (PSD) for a break, doing an article search, completing an obstacle course, obedience training, guard-and-bark drills, vehicle clearing, area search, building search, call-offs, and narcotic sniffs. For the most part, those exercises and patterns associate

k-9 patrol orientation



certain locations with certain stimulations on a regular basis. For example, the PSD is in a patrol car that is parked

next to another patrol vehicle

containing a barking dog, or perhaps the PSD watches an agitator put on a bite suit prior to an exercise while the handler is in street clothes. Yet, in the real world, when the PSD is en route to a crime in progress, the handler likely will not park next to another barking K-9, nor will the team watch an agitator suit up prior to a search. The point is that a structured and well-planned K-9 patrol orientation will help determine the PSD's success on the street.

The exercises listed in this article should be coordinated with a K-9 training partner. Ideally, the training partner should be an experienced K-9 handler. The training partner rides along with the K-9 team during the orientation phase and serves as the decoy unless another officer is able to do so. The K-9 team and training partner all participate daily during the patrol orientation. The training partner's primary responsibilities include watching the dog and observing his attentiveness and readiness when not under the handler's immediate control, particularly for agencies that deploy their dogs out of open windows. All training should be

Keep exercises simple initially, as in basic

thoroughly documented on the daily training log. Each exercise should be attempted at least once per shift.

Patrol-Orientation Exercises

Article search. The training partner can throw out an article in a predetermined area such as a front yard, park, or open field. The training partner can direct the handler in the direction of the article if need be.

Keeping the K-9 in the patrol car (for agencies that deploy out of open windows). The handler speeds up to an area that is safe and cleared of bystanders, gets out of the patrol car, and runs out of sight of the PSD. The training partner can be in a safe place holding the remote transmitter for the electronic collar (e-collar) and let the handler know whether the PSD is coming out of the patrol car without being commanded to do so by the handler. If that occurs, the training partner yells out "car" and applies an e-collar correction with the command.

The training partner yelling out "car" indicates to the handler that he or she must return to the patrol car as fast as possible to ensure that the PSD stays in the car. If you deploy using a door pop, these training scenarios also apply. The training partner can let the handler know whether the dog is attentive and remains focused in the direction the handler ran out of sight, as well as tell the handler if the door opens and the dog comes out without being called or if the door malfunctions and does not open when needed.

Building and area searches. Each K-9 handler should have

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■ **Opposite above and left:** Successful completion of an obstacle course should be part of patrol orientation training. **Opposite below:** The police service dog (PSD) should be able to perform an area search to locate objects that may be related to a specific crime. The PSD must learn whether the handler wants him to retrieve the object, or whether the dog should simply locate the object and alert the handler by barking.

training, and don't overwhelm the dog.



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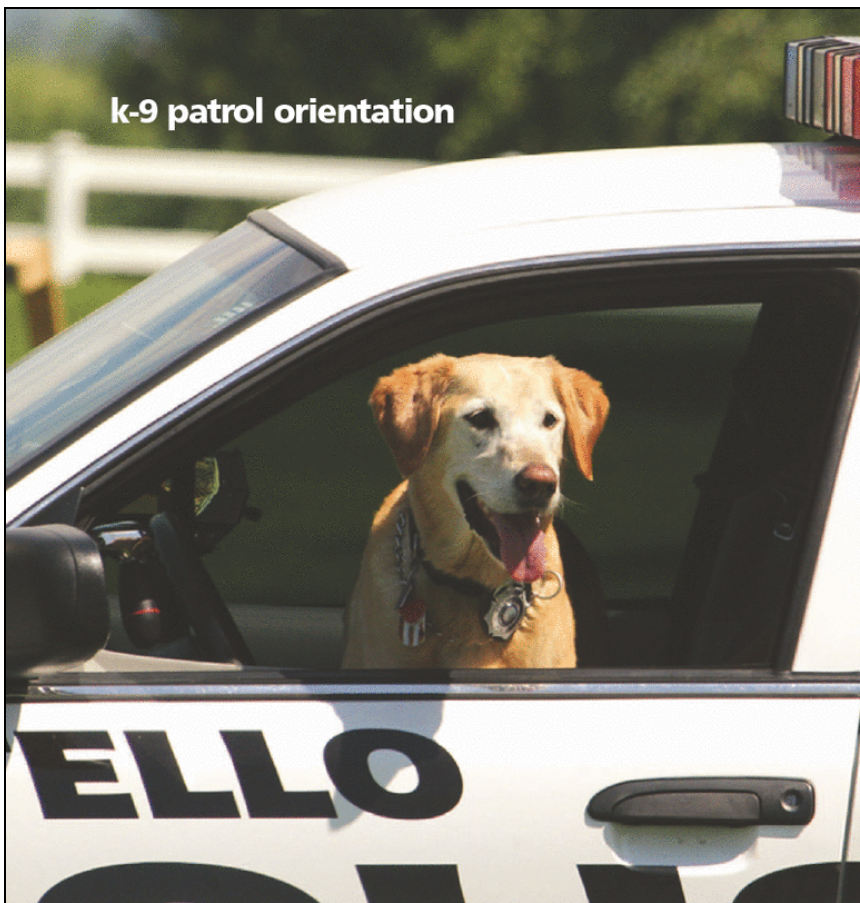
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k-9 patrol orientation



■ **Left:** A police service dog must be trained to stay in the car unless commanded to exit, or unless the door automatically opens. The PSD should keep his paws and head inside the car, even if the window is open.

PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF ACEIS.COM

The minimum recommended time for an orientation phase is two weeks.

a bite sleeve in his or her patrol car at all times. The training partner then becomes an agitator and can hide in available buildings wearing the bite sleeve. It is not important that the PSD apprehend the training partner. The sleeve is for protection in case the PSD is able to make contact with the agitator-training partner. Never allow the PSD to have the bite sleeve during a search, because he may release the sleeve and re-engage the agitator. Ideally, and more beneficial for the training, the training partner can wear a bite suit in lieu of a sleeve.

Detection sniff. The training partner can hide narcotics or scented cotton in vehicles prior to the vehicles being towed. The handler should direct the sniff and make it fun for the dog.

Obedience. Obedience is the key to all training. The handler commands the PSD, and compliance to the commands will be only as consistent as the handler is consistent in training.

Try to perform obedience exercises at various locations using various distractions; during the second week, include crowds of people, other officers, and nearby vehicular traffic on a busy street but out of the immediate view of the

drivers. Remove the dog from the car and walk around traffic collisions or other officer-oriented activities that the handler may not expose a seasoned dog to: that familiarizes the dog to a working environment. When returning to the car, verbally direct the dog back into the car from a safe and reasonable distance.

The Orientation Timeframe

The K-9 patrol orientation may last for a brief or for an extended period of time and will help determine the team's success, as well any failures. The minimum recommended time for an orientation phase is two weeks. A four-week period is ideal and can provide an opportunity for a second training partner to participate during weeks three and four to assist and evaluate the team. However, you must consider extending the training period if the team is not progressing to the satisfaction of the training partner(s) and the K-9 staff.

Keep exercises simple initially, as in basic training, and don't overwhelm the dog. Remember, handler and training partner share equal responsibility for ensuring that proper training occurs during the K-9 patrol orientation. ■