



Dog Scouts of America Evaluation Criteria

Disaster Preparedness

PURPOSE: This badge requires a significant commitment when preparing items and plans necessary in the event of an emergency. The badge prepares the handler to react calmly in emergency situations knowing that he/she has prepared well to reduce his/her own stress as well as the stress that would not be unexpected for the dog when he is put in unusual situations.

DOG REQUIREMENTS: The dog is required to accept actions a stranger may take in an emergency in order to provide aid or rescue. Additionally, the dog must show that he can quickly respond to cues that might save his life in an emergency and must show he can behave appropriately when left in a crate without the handler present.

HANDLER REQUIREMENTS: The handler requirements are extensive, and a large amount of education and planning are required. The handler must understand the types of emergencies that are likely to occur and make plans to coordinate activities and communication that may be required if these emergencies were to happen. Some actions require the handler to set up plans that involve others that reside outside of the home and the area. It will be necessary for the handler to gain commitment from the individuals involved in his/her plans. The handler must prepare a thoroughly stocked evacuation/shelter in place kit for him/herself and the dog.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Handler must prepare written plans, gather documents and photos and prepare a thoroughly stocked evacuation/shelter in place kit that includes the listed items at a minimum. A crate is needed as well as a vehicle and a couple of strangers to help with testing. During evaluation, a stranger is defined as someone who is not well known to the dog. It's okay to use an acquaintance but not someone the dog knows well enough to become excited when he sees the person. If the dog gets excited when seeing anyone and everyone, the stranger should be someone the dog does not see on a regular basis.

PROCESS: For evaluation purposes the evaluator should remain at a distance of at least 15' so as not to influence the dog's behavior. The 'stranger' should treat the dog as if he/she doesn't know him at all and should not use the dog's name. Using a generic name for the dog, like 'puppy', 'honey' or 'buddy' is okay as long as the generic doesn't also happen to be the dog's name.

Sometimes when under stress like in a disaster situation a dog's normal behavior is altered. Practicing behaviors that will allow a stranger to capture and provide aid and comfort to the dog can reduce any trauma the dog might experience in an emergency.

During evaluation, the dog must **willingly demonstrate** the behaviors below without the handler present. Each situation should be as normal as possible, except that it is a stranger, not the handler taking the action. This means that if the dog is normally left in the car strapped into a seatbelt with the radio on and the car running, that's how the evaluation should be conducted. The dog should not show any signs of aggression.

- **Allow a stranger to remove him from a crate, car or the home** without the handler present, under conditions that are as normal as possible. The dog should be able to be led away on a leash without excessive pulling or other signs of stress.



- **Go to a stranger** without the person using his name. Alternatively, the dog allows himself to be easily captured. This should be conducted in a safe area, but not a fenced one. The dog needs to be trusted to not run off.
- **Allow handling of all parts of his body** including his eyes, ears, paws, and gums, by a stranger and will allow his groin area to be inspected for a tattoo. This exam should be done without a muzzle. The stranger may speak to the dog using a calm and soothing voice or may use simple commands (sit, down, etc.) to calm the dog. The dog's name should not be used.
- **Allow himself to be muzzled** by a stranger using a standard muzzle. The dog should show little resistance to the muzzle and should be able to be led away by the collar after being muzzled.
- **Accept being lifted and carried by a stranger.** A large dog may require a 2-person carry. The carry need be only 10' or so. A muzzle should be used for this exercise.
- **Go willingly into a crate or be lifted into a crate** that is elevated on top of other crates or a table. The crate should not be the dog's own, or if that is the only crate available the dog's bedding and any other personal items should be removed. The dog should be able to be moved without the use of a muzzle.
- **Remain in the crate calmly and quietly for at least 10 minutes** without digging, chewing, scratching or barking excessively, or trying to escape. The handler should not be present. The crate should be in a room, not a vehicle and there should be normal activity in the room. Occasional whining, pawing, etc. is okay but it should not be sustained.
- **Swim at least 15' without panic or excessive splashing** while not wearing a life jacket. Handler may be present. This can be demonstrated or if not possible due to time of year or lack of access to water, the handler can provide proof that the dog has earned one of the DSA badges that require the dog to swim. In this situation the handler must attest that the dog was not wearing a life jacket at the time the badge was earned.

The dog must be taught to respond to an **emergency 'wait' or 'stop' cue** that will completely stop his forward motion immediately as he is moving away from the handler. This response has the ability to save the dog's life by keeping him from moving further away yet stopping him from coming back. There are many situations where this type of 'stop and stay' is preferable to 'stop and come', including situations where the dog is moving in traffic or has already crossed a busy street.

For evaluation, the dog should be put into a situation where he moves away from but in the same direction as the handler such as when the dog is running on a trail or through a field. The dog may not be on leash and may not be in a fenced area. The dog should respond with a sudden stop. He may turn back toward the handler but may not take more than a step or two in his/her direction. The dog may stop in any position and may be taught to sit or down when he stops. The dog should not be stopping for any other reason than the cue given by the handler, so it wouldn't be acceptable for the dog to go to a target and stop. However, it would be okay for the dog to stop when given the cue on the way to a target.

The dog also needs to demonstrate that he will respond to the universal hand signal for 'stop' when he is **moving toward the handler**. The dog should start at least 20' away and the stop must be no closer than 10' from the handler when the cue is given. The dog must stop suddenly in response to the cue.



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During evaluation, the handler will be asked to **describe the basics of disaster planning and preparation**, why it is important and what types of emergencies are likely to happen in his/her area. This knowledge can be gained through research, or by attending a class taught by an evaluator.

The handler must **create plans** for different types of emergencies **including creating a packet** that contains the dog's vaccination and health records, photos of the dog and a signed letter designating a person who will care for the dog if the handler can't and will search for the dog if he becomes lost. The handler should mail everything in the packet to the designated person and have a copy available for the evaluator to review. The date the packet was sent to the person should be noted on the handler's copy.

It is highly recommended that the handler develop a plan with a neighbor to evacuate the dog in the event that an evacuation order is issued and the handler is not available. The neighbor should be instructed to gather only the dog and any essentials, like medications, in such a situation since time is likely to be short. Anything that can easily be purchased should be left behind.

The handler needs to be able to **describe the unique physical characteristics of the dog** that would help to distinguish him from others that might look similar. The evaluator will ask the handler to provide this information without the dog present, as would be the case when talking with someone on the phone who may have the dog. The evaluator will then check the dog to see if he/she can, in fact identify the dog based on the information supplied by the handler. The characteristics should be easy to access and locate, meaning if one of the characteristics is a distinguishing mark on the dog's gums the evaluator should have no trouble checking the dog's gums. Characteristics could include unique coat patterns, marks, scars, etc. on any part of the dog's body, as long as the dog will allow access to the area for verification.

The handler must have proof that they have prepared an **evacuation/shelter in place kit** for him/herself and the dog. The kit should contain all of the items on the provided list and must be able to sustain both human and dog for a minimum of 5 days. Proof may be in the form of photos along with a checklist of the items with expiration dates for items that will need replacement over time.

Proof of the dog's **permanent identification** as well as **collar ID tags** must be reviewed by the evaluator. If the dog has a tattoo the evaluator must be able to see it. Copies of paperwork from a microchip or other registry can be used as proof as well. Tags should be in good condition and easy to read.

ALLOWED:

- Calling the dog with a generic name
- Using treats to coax behaviors
- Speaking calmly & quietly to the dog

NOT ALLOWED:

- A 'stranger' who is well known to the dog
- Using the dog's name when calling him
- Any sign of aggression from the dog
- Handler who is tentative or is not specific when responding to questions or talking about plans