

URBAN SEARCH & RESCUE CANINE UNIT

INFORMATION & APPLICATION PACK

**VOLUNTEER TRAINERS AND
SUPPORT PERSONNEL**



GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

DFES

Department of Fire &
Emergency Services



PLEASE READ ALL INFORMATION IN THIS DOCUMENT PRIOR TO SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION.

If you have any queries regarding this process or the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Canine Unit in general, please contact the Canine Liaison Officer, Lisa Spatcher, on lisa.spatcher@dfes.wa.gov.au or 0408 946 582.

INFORMATION PACK CONTAINS:

1. What we do
2. What we look for – Support Personnel
3. What we look for – Volunteer Trainers
4. The application & membership process

APPLICATION PACK CONTAINS:

- A: Introductory statement
- B: Application
- C: Declaration



WHAT WE DO

Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Canine teams are skilled in the efficient and speedy location of trapped live victims due to building collapses. The canines are trained to work independently of their dog handler on unstable surfaces, in potentially dangerous situations, to find and indicate on the strongest source of live human scent, even if the unseen victim is metres below the ground. Canine teams are an essential element of a USAR Task Force, particularly in the critical period after an incident has first occurred.

‘Canine teams are an essential element of a USAR Task Force.’

USAR canines are trained to find live casualties in a wide variety of circumstances including collapsed structures and empty buildings, as well as vehicular accidents such as train or plane crashes. As a part of the team, handlers and canines become familiar with rubble piles, aircraft, working at heights,

crowd work, marine travel and various other scenarios. Qualified canines can progress to become Disabled Access Dogs (DAD) permitted on public transport and airlines.

The Unit’s equipment cache and training is conducted at a purpose-built USAR training facility at the Western Australia Fire and Emergency Services Academy in Forrestfield.

Support Personnel are a crucial part of training. Once a handler releases a dog to ‘go find’, it is the support staff who encourage and reward the dog to ensure they make the find successfully. Support Personnel play with the dogs and assist with any training exercises that might require more than one person.

Volunteer Trainers are on hand to help the Unit with any tricky training situations, or provide sessions to team members on training tips and techniques.



WHAT WE LOOK FOR SUPPORT PERSONNEL

No experience is required. USAR looks for people who are interested in working with search and rescue dogs on a casual basis.

Support Personnel are primarily required to act as 'victims' for the search dogs. This means hiding somewhere for the dog to find, then rewarding them with lots of praise and a good game of tug-of-war. They also assist in training dogs where multiple people are required, for example, holding a seesaw steady as a dog walks across it for the first time. Support Personnel are also expected to watch the dogs while they are training and provide feedback to the handlers post-exercise.

To be considered for the role of Support Personnel, you must:

- **Enjoy working with dogs of all breeds**
(but particularly working breeds)
- **Be enthusiastic and energetic**
It doesn't have to be all the time – but the dogs really love it when someone is super excited to give them their toy!
- **Be available for Sunday training sessions**
There are no minimum attendance requirements for Support Personnel, but the more sessions attended the better. These are usually held in Forrestfield but alternative training sites are sometimes used.
- **Have moderate physical fitness**
Playing tug-of-war with a dog is hard work so a moderate level of fitness is desirable in order to avoid injury. Being able to climb a ladder and be agile enough to safely navigate an unstable rubble pile is recommended
- **Not have a phobia of confined spaces or heights.**
- Be willing to obtain a police (compulsory) and medical (if required) clearance.
- **Be willing to assist with other general tasks related to the Unit.** This includes helping set up and pack away during training and at promotional events.





WHAT WE LOOK FOR VOLUNTEER TRAINERS

Volunteer Trainers are dog-training professionals who are willing to volunteer their time on an ad-hoc basis or act as a training consultant for any training issues that may arise.

Volunteer Trainers require solid dog training experience in an applicable field (such as Obedience, Agility, Physical Conditioning, or Scent Work) and the ability to provide assistance in person at training sessions or remotely via email, phone or social media.

To be considered for the role of Volunteer Trainer, you must:

- **Have qualifications and/or experience in an applicable dog training field (e.g. Obedience/Agility/Scent Training)**
- **Be available for either training or consultation with the Unit**
Trainer interaction can be regular, limited to a number of sessions, organised outside regular training sessions or via remote consultation.
- **Have low/moderate physical fitness**
Depending on the type of training, you may be working on rubble piles or uneven surfaces. Being fit enough to climb a ladder and being agile enough to safely navigate an unstable rubble pile is recommended.
- **Be willing to obtain a police and medical clearance if required.**

THE APPLICATION & MEMBERSHIP PROCESS



The below information outlines the expected process a Support Personnel or Volunteer Trainer applicant will undertake in order to become an operational member of the USAR K9 WA unit.

01. Submit an online application when advertised.

Application must include:

- a. Cover letter
- b. Application form
- c. Declaration

Applications that do not contain all requested information may not be considered.

02. Attend an Open Day

Suitable candidates will be contacted with an offer to attend the next USAR Canine Unit Open Day. The Open Day will comprise of:

- a. A demonstration of a live search
- b. An example of the training required for a USAR dog
- c. An interview with the applicant

If the applicant is unable to attend the Open Day on the advertised day, they can be added to a waitlist for vacant positions or invited to the next Open Day (held every six to 12 months).

Note: remotely-located Volunteer Trainer applicants can conduct their discussions via phone or email.

03. Receive an offer of probationary membership.

Successful applicants will be offered probationary membership within the team. The probationary period is designed to allow the new team member to trial the Unit and training and determine if it is right for them.

In order to pass probation, Support Personnel will need to attend 20 training sessions and adhere to all team rules.

Volunteer Trainers will have a probationary period of six months – at the end of this period if they are still engaged they can continue as an active member of the team.

Support Personnel and Volunteer Trainers are a crucial part of training an Urban Search and Rescue dog – we look forward to welcoming you to the team!



URBAN SEARCH & RESCUE CANINE UNIT

APPLICATION FORM

VOLUNTEER TRAINERS AND
SUPPORT PERSONNEL



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A: INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

Please use this space to write a brief statement introducing yourself, including:

- why you would like to join the USAR Canine Unit WA unit;
- what experience (if any) you have with dog training; and
- what attributes you feel you would bring to the team.

If preferred, this section may be left blank and a separate cover letter attached.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

B: APPLICANT DETAILS

I am applying for (please tick one):

Support Personnel	<input type="checkbox"/>	Volunteer Trainer	<input type="checkbox"/>
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APPLICANT INFORMATION

Applicant Name	
Residential Address	
Work Phone	
Mobile Phone	
Home Phone	
Email	
Occupation	
Where did you hear about us?	
Do you have any skills, qualifications and/or experience that could be relevant to USAR Canine Unit WA?	
Do you have any injuries or medical conditions that may impact your ability to meet fitness requirements as outlined in the Information Pack?	

C: DECLARATION

By signing below, you declare that:

- You have read the 'USAR Canine Unit WA – Information Pack – Volunteer Handler and Support Personnel'
- You are available for training sessions
- You meet the fitness requirements outlined in the Information Pack **OR**
- You do not meet the requirements and have declared any relevant medical concerns in section B.

You completed all sections of this form:

- A: Introductory statement (or separate cover letter attached)
- B: Application
- C: Declaration

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Full Name: _____