

Training Attendance, Search Response & Physical Fitness Requirements for Members & Trainees

March 2009 Update

Since its founding, NEK-9 SAR has required that all team members meet specific levels of participation – attend 80% of each year's monthly unit trainings and respond to 60% of searches for which they are called. Additionally each dog handler must successfully complete the annual physical fitness test.

To maintain high attendance and search response the following policies and procedures were accepted by membership vote on 2/6/03. (Search response & training attendance will be recorded by the Training Committee Chair.)

Definitions:

NEK9 SAR calendar year is February 1 to January 31

Unit Training: 12 meetings on the 3rd Saturday of each month. Some years an alternate date will be set in advance for special programs.

80% attendance at unit trainings: every team member must attend a minimum of 10 monthly unit trainings in a 12 meeting NEK9 calendar year or 80% of however many unit trainings are held in a year.

60% response to search callouts: every qualified team member has said they agreed to respond to 60% of the searches they have been contacted about. Note: not all team members will be called for all searches. The decision regarding which teams are appropriately trained for the search task resides with the OL.

Search Callout and Response: 60% response to callout is based on the following search callout procedure:

- Each team member is responsible for letting their dispatcher know in advance if they are unavailable for a search. Any search that occurs during the period of being offline is not part of their search response record.
- Each team member is responsible for providing their dispatcher with the ways to contact them for searches, including how to leave messages about a search.
- A positive callout response occurs when direct contact is made by the dispatcher to a team member who then agrees to respond to the search **or** the dispatcher leaves a message on an agreed upon message system asking them to respond to the search.
- A negative callout response occurs when the team member says they cannot respond when contacted directly or they do not respond to the recorded message.

Each dispatcher keeps a record of who they have called, what method(s) were used to make contact, and where they left a message.

Attendance at Unit Trainings:

Unless notified in advance NEK9 SAR holds their monthly unit trainings on the 3rd Saturday of every month. Team members must attend 80% of these unit trainings.

To offer members some flexibility regarding Saturday unit trainings, the executive committee proposes that any team member may substitute one of either of the following for **ONE** of the monthly unit trainings required to meet 80% attendance:

1. One specialty skills training session (cadaver, water, avalanche) which includes other NEK9 SAR subgroup members

2. One seminar or workshop covering skills that will enhance the general good of NEK9 SAR by the team member's attendance (Wilderness medical or skill training, dog training, etc.)

Any request to make a training or workshop substitution must be sent to the vice president. The request does not have to precede the training for which you wish to make a substitution. The substitution must document the date, the nature of the training, & who participated or instructed. Any team member falling below the 80% attendance will be put on probation for 6 months. They will be required to meet the 80% unit training attendance for the next 6 months at which time probation will be lifted. If attendance remains below 80% during the probation period, the team member will be removed from the search callout list at the end of the probation period and the executive board will review their membership status. Any team member who can't attend 80% of unit trainings yearly for medical, family, or work related reasons may seek a waiver of the requirement for specified period of time. This request must include an explanation of the need for the waiver and a specific date when the team member will return to full participation. The executive board will authorize this request.

Any team member who doesn't respond positively to 60% of their search callouts in a NEK-9 SAR business year (February 1 – January 31) will be put on probation. They will be required to meet the 60% positive search response for the next 6 months at which time probation will be lifted. If their response remains below 60% at the end of the probation period, the team member will be removed from the callout list and the executive board will review their membership status. Any team member who can't meet the 60% search response requirement may request a waiver of the requirement for specified period of time. This request must include an explanation of the need for the waiver and a specific date when the team member will return to full participation. The executive board will authorize this request.

NEK9 SAR Annual Physical Fitness Test: To be taken annually* by all trainee and certified handlers.

- Trail hike of 3.5 miles at either of two specified locations (Randolph VT or Hillsborough, NH) or other trail meeting distance and elevation requirements.
- Trail includes elevation change of 750-850 feet
- Carry 20 lb pack
- Must complete in an average of 30 minutes per mile (105 minutes)
- Must be taken annually between March 1-June 1
- Must be verified by another certified team member through GPS track log and stop watch time.

(Interested new member applicants to NEK9 SAR will be asked to pretest themselves on this hike to help them determine their physical fitness for this work.)

Any team member (handler or trainee) who fails the physical fitness test will be placed on limited status. The member/trainee will need to successfully re-test within 4 months of the date of the unsatisfactory fitness test.

* For the first year of implementation all currently certified handlers and trainees will be grandfathered for 2009. Everyone will take the test as specified and those results will be recorded.

Note: If a team member or trainee is experiencing medical issues they should follow the current procedure for obtaining a medical waiver

Medical Waivers: granted on a case by case basis to members who are experiencing medical issues themselves or within their family. The member should let the OL know the details of their situation. The OL will bring the medical waiver request to the Executive Committee for their approval. The medical waiver will apply until the medical issue is resolved. The waiver will release the member from meeting the full search response and training requirements. The member will be asked to keep the OL up to date on their situation. Because of the impact of a medical waiver on the team it will be subject to on going reevaluation.

If the dog and/or handler were unable to train or respond to searches during their medical waiver, then, before returning to full callout status, the training committee chair and the OL will need to determine if they are search ready.

