

K-9 Unit



The Aurora Police Department K-9 Unit was formed in 1975 with a single dog, Moose, and handler Ofc. Goetsch. Since then, the unit has grown to six dogs with their handlers (a K-9 team is a dog and handler) and a sergeant.

The K-9 unit performs a variety of tasks from searching buildings for suspects to officer protection. Recently, five dogs have been trained in narcotics detection and the sixth specializes in explosives detection.

The primary duty of K-9 teams is to support patrol officers, but they are frequently used by other units in the department due to their special capabilities.

K-9 teams work swing shifts covering seven days a week. There is always a K-9 team on call during off-shift hours. The K-9 teams train one day a week, often with members of other metro area K-9 teams.

Police dogs are a unique asset to the city. The primary benefit is the safety provided to the officers. Dogs will search areas that would be dangerous for officers alone to search. If a suspect wants to attack or fight with officers, the mere presence of a dog will often times prevent any violence. If the suspect still fights, the dog can prevent injuries to officers and can often minimize potential injury to the suspect. The dogs offer an additional benefit in that they can search large areas much faster than a team of patrol officers, letting those officers handle other duties.

Dogs

It requires a very special animal to function as a police canine. These dogs are expected to search for suspects in unfamiliar settings and also may have to fight with them. The dogs must also be social with the handler, other officers, and citizens that they come in contact with. The dogs working in the Aurora Police Department have additional abilities to search for drugs or explosives.

Since these dogs are difficult to find, most police departments use vendors that search around the world for just the right animal. Many dogs come from Europe. When the K-9 unit is looking for a new dog, the unit trainer and the handler travel to the vendor where the trainer will conduct a series of tests to see if a particular dog is capable of becoming an Aurora K-9.

The dogs that are selected cost thousands of dollars because of their special traits. All of the Department's dogs have been purchased with donations from citizens and the local business community. For the last 10 years, the K-9 unit has partnered with local restaurants to conduct annual fund raisers

where the public can see demonstrations of the K-9 teams. Without the public's help, the K-9 unit would not be able to function at such a professional level.

Our dogs live at home with their handlers. The department provides all of the needed items for the dog to include kennels, dog houses, food, equipment, special police cars, and veterinary care.

Handlers and Training

Training of the K-9 handlers begins with a careful selection process. Only members of the Department of the officer rank are eligible to hold a K-9 position. Once a handler is selected, the handler and dog go through a 12-week training program with the Department's K-9 trainer. The training culminates in a certification course held at the Utah State Police Academy. K-9 teams must re-certify annually and attend weekly training to make sure that the teams are functioning at their best.

K-9 Unit

Sgt. Rex McKinney (303-739-1716)

Ofc. Steve Elswick and "Doerak"

Ofc. Chris Lippert and "Rex"

Ofc. Mike Hanifin and "Muskit"

Ofc. Michelle Hanley and "Max"

Ofc. David Exstrom and "Flash"