

## PREFACE

This material started as a very brief lecture for the course, *Field Team Signcutter* (FTS). The FTS course is a 50-hour introduction to the basic art, science, and skills of awareness, signcutting, and tracking. The Commonwealth of Virginia currently has certified over 100 FTS, resulting in more FTS searchers responding to searches. The ultimate goal is to get all searchers trained in signcutting and tracking. But, as with the growth of any program, new problems have surfaced.

Confusion and problems developed at a recent search, where ten FTS responded, and seven of them were placed with canine teams. In an attempt to be creative and get them into the field, management coupled them with canine handlers. It seemed like a good idea at the time. Neither the FTS nor the canine teams knew how to operate together efficiently or effectively. When analyzing these problems later, we realized that even though we discuss signcutting and tracking with canine teams in the FTS class, we had not been giving those beginning tracking students any in-depth information. The students need to know how a canine team might operate and what the canine team may expect from the tracking person. Likewise, canine handlers have not been educated about the training, tactics, or abilities of assigned trackers.

Because of the problems that had surfaced, we realized several important steps needed to be taken. The first was the proper cross education for both handlers and trackers. A major purpose of this book is to allow both specialists to begin to understand the tactics, skills, and limitations of each type of resource. The second step involves actual field training conducted together. The third is rational combined deployment on real searches.

This book began as a simple set of guidelines for trackers who might work with canines. However, it soon became apparent that in order for true teamwork to occur the information also had to be directed at canine handlers. The final step in the evolution of the book was the realization that it is ultimately a management decision to combine resources.

Over the years, the authors, an incident commander, a dog handler, and a tracker learned to put aside their differences and work together. Team work not only benefitted each resource, it clearly helped the lost subject. We are now steadfast in our belief that under the proper circumstances other regions of the country would also benefit from this combined tactic. If we have managed to not only get along, but also become great friends, then it can be repeated elsewhere.

For any book to improve, it must benefit from its users' suggestions. Since we all want the understanding and working relationship between these disciplines to improve and assist us in the field, it is requested that you contact the authors with any suggestions, comments, or additions for future revisions.

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