



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA SEARCH & RESCUE STANDARD 7400

TYPE 3 TRACKER - OPERATIONAL TRACKER

VASARCO Tracking Standards Committee chaired by Rob Speiden

**APPROVED BY THE VIRGINIA SEARCH AND RESCUE COUNCIL and
THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

2019

This is the final document approved in 2019. It presents the certification standard for credentialing as a Type 3 – Operational Tracker. It is accompanied by COVSAR Tracking Standards 7000 - 7900.

7400 Type 3 - Operational Tracker

7400 This standard establishes a certification named "Type 3 - Operational Tracker" (O.T.) and outlines all applicable requirements for achieving this certification.

7401 Scope: These standards were developed to define the minimum qualification requirements necessary for certification as an O.T. by the Commonwealth of Virginia's Department of Emergency Management (VDEM).

The certification issued under these standards is a requirement only for those personnel who wish to voluntarily participate in the search and rescue program of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management at the level indicated in this standard.

7402 Purpose:

7402.1 Outlined in the following standard are all the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) expected at the Type 3 - Operational Tracker certification level.

7403 General:

7403.1 The O.T. is willing to perform the following functions in the general environment of the Commonwealth of Virginia any time of the year, day or night, and in most weather conditions and terrain experienced in the Commonwealth of Virginia. In order to accomplish this, the O.T. will be able to

- 7403.1.1 Search for missing persons in wilderness, rural, suburban and urban areas, using the rudimentary art and skills associated with awareness, signcutting and tracking addressed in this standard and VDEM standard 7300, as a member of a ground search and rescue team that has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with VDEM.
- 7403.1.2 Assist, when needed, in missing person investigations on searches to help obtain necessary tracking information.
- 7403.1.3 Demonstrate familiarity of crime scene preservation procedures and techniques.
- 7403.1.4 Interface with and instruct other searchers, search staff, and local agencies on the abilities of Trackers and tracking team tactics that might be utilized.
- 7403.1.5 Demonstrate the ability to explain to other searchers and staff on how to be clue, sign and track aware and the importance of each.
- 7403.1.6 Navigate accurately on land, day or night in most weather and terrain conditions common to the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- 7403.1.7 Sustain personal operations for eight (8) or more hours in the field.
- 7403.1.8 Survive an unexpected wilderness emergency.
- 7403.1.9 Perform other activities which may be required based upon the Tracker's knowledge, skills, abilities, training, experience and base's needs including, but not limited to, working in base, working with other ground teams, and assisting ground rescue teams in the evacuation of the search subject(s).

7404 Definitions:

The definitions used by this standard are listed and defined in COVSAR Standard 7200. They may or may not reflect the definitions used by other individuals, groups, agencies or publications.

7405 Prerequisites:

- 7405.1 Personnel must be at least 18 years of age or older.
- 7405.2 Applicants must be currently certified as either a VDEM Search Team Member (STM) or Search Team Leader (STL), or an equivalent as recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia's Department of Emergency Management Search and Rescue Program. Proof of current certification must be presented along with the application for certification as an O.T.
- 7405.3 Applicants must have a background check completed within the last three years before applying for certification, and agree to allow the applicant's member group to perform a background check when recertifying or three years from the last one, whichever is first.
- 7405.4 Current CPR and First Aid Certifications.
- 7405.5 Completion of the NIMS Courses; 100, 700, and 800.
- 7405.6 Completion of the National Park Service Basic Search and Rescue course.

7406 Forms:

- 7406.1 Application for Certification: Type 3 Tracker - Operational Tracker
- 7406.2 Operational Tracker Position Task Book
- 7406.3 Tracking Evaluation Scoresheet
- 7406.4 Tracker Recommendation Form (TRF)

7407 Testing:

- 7407.1 Testing will include written and practical exam stations and will be conducted within the scope of the knowledge, skills and abilities conveyed in the Foundations for Awareness, Signcutting and Tracking Training Standard 7200.
- 7407.2 The tracking candidate must demonstrate a working understanding of the items listed under each subject and must be able to demonstrate the ability to perform and/or discuss the skills delineated in Tracking Standard 7200. Specific written and field tests have been designed to evaluate the candidate's knowledge, skills and abilities.
- 7407.3 Each candidate will be individually evaluated on the following field evaluation stations:
 - 7407.3.1 Aging Station
 - 7407.3.2 Known / Unknown Station
 - 7407.3.3 Point Last Seen / Last Known Point (PLS/LKP) Station
 - 7407.3.4 Sign Cutting Station
 - 7407.3.5 Sign Interpretation Station
 - 7407.3.6 Sign Squares Station
 - 7407.3.7 Tracking Tools Station
 - 7407.3.8 External Sources - The tracking candidate will have opportunity to submit tracking report(s) and Form 7406.4 - TRF in support of his/her evaluation.
- 7407.4 Candidates may, for the O.T. certification level, take any and all evaluation stations during the daytime.

7408 Evaluation Categories

Candidates will be evaluated on ten (10) categories (with subcategories) as delineated in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Category list of Knowledge, Skills and Abilities assessed for a Tracking certification and associated ratio of score contribution from respective evaluation stations.

	Category and Subcategory	Evaluation stations (7407.x.x) and scoring ratio (percentage) e.g. 3.1 below refers to line 7407.3.1
1	TOOLS	3.3 (20%), 3.7 (80%)
2	INTERVIEWING	3.3 (100%)
3	PLS /LKP	3.3 (100%)
4	DETECTION / AWARENESS	
4.1	TRACK DETECTION	3.2 (25%), 3.3 (25%), 3.4 (25%), 3.6 (25%)
4.2	CLUE AWARENESS	3.3 (40%), 3.4 (60%)
5	INTERPRETATION	
5.1	HUMANIMAL	3.3 (10%), 3.4 (10%), 3.5 (80%)
5.2	IDENTIFICATION	3.2 (80%), 3.3 (20%)
5.3	AGING	3.1 (80%), 3.3 (20%)
5.4	DIRECTION OF TRAVEL	3.3 (20%), 3.4 (30%), 3.6 (50%)
6	RECORDING/DOCUMENTATION	
6.1	PHOTOGRAPHING	3.3 (100%)
6.2	DRAWING	3.2 (50%), 3.3 (50%)
6.3	CASTING	3.3 (100%)
6.4	REPORTING	3.8 (100%)
7	TRAILING	3.3 (100%)
8	CLUE MANAGEMENT	3.3 (100%)
9	PROFESSIONALISM	3.3 (20%), 3.7 (10%), 3.8 (70%)
10	COMMUNICATION	3.3 (60%), 3.4 (20%), 3.7 (20%)

- 7408.1 Scores from each evaluation station will contribute to an overall score for each category based on the respective ratios listed in Table 1.
- 7408.2 The candidate's certification will be based on an overall score averaged and weighted from all of the individual category and subcategory scores.
- 7408.3 If the candidate wishes to change his/her score on record, s/he may retake the relevant evaluation station(s) according to evaluators' availability.
- 7408.4 The highest set of scores achieved on any station within the last thirty-six (36) months will be the score that is applied towards certification for a candidate. In the event that there are two or more sets of scores (from two or more completed stations) with varying results in different skill categories, the candidate may only choose one station event score sequence to count as the set of scores considered for certification. In other words, scores cannot be mixed or matched from different testing events of the same station.
- 7408.5 It is recommended that, should a candidate want to retake a station, that the station be conducted by a different evaluator than whomever conducted the first one.

7409 Certification

Candidates who meet or exceed the minimum required scoring, in addition to completing the prerequisites and requirements in this standard, will be certified as a Type 3 - Operational Tracker. Minimum scoring requirements include the following:

- 7409.1 Candidate scores an eighty percent (80%) or higher on the written test. Candidates must wait a minimum of three (3) months between test-taking opportunities if s/he wishes to retake it.
- 7409.2 Candidate achieves, within the last thirty-six (36) months preceding submission of application for O.T., a minimum score in the following categories (with subcategories) as shown in Table 2 according to scoring described in COVSAR Standard 7300 – Criteria for Field Evaluations.

Table 2. Listing of Knowledge, Skill and Ability categories, subcategories and minimum score for achieving O.T. certification.

	Category and Subcategory	Minimum Certification Score	Weight for Overall Score Determination
1	TOOLS	3.0	0.62
2	INTERVIEWING	2.0	0.85
3	PLS /LKP	3.0	0.95
4	DETECTION / AWARENESS	---	
4.1	TRACK DETECTION	2.5	1.00
4.2	CLUE AWARENESS	2.5	0.96
5	INTERPRETATION	---	
5.1	HUMANIMAL	3.0	0.93
5.2	IDENTIFICATION	3.0	0.90
5.3	AGING	2.0	0.98
5.4	DIRECTION OF TRAVEL	3.0	0.78
6	RECORDING/DOCUMENTATION	---	
6.1	PHOTOGRAPHING	2.0	0.61
6.2	DRAWING	2.0	0.84
6.3	CASTING	N/A	0.36
6.4	REPORTING	2.0	0.78
7	TRAILING	2.0	0.95
8	CLUE MANAGEMENT	3.0	0.84
9	PROFESSIONALISM	3.0*	0.93
10	COMMUNICATION	2.0	0.75

*At least one Tracker Recommendation Form submitted for candidate (scores averaged if more than one received)

- 7409.3 Candidate achieves a combined overall weighted score of **3.0** or higher in all of the categories described in section 7408 Table 1 (according to scoring described in COVSAR Standard 7300 – Criteria for Field Evaluations). Note: weighted values described in Table 2 were determined by the Tracking Standards Committee via Mattson consensus on the priority of category skills. These weighted values are multiplied against the overall category score, and then divided by the total number of categories (14) to get the resulting overall weighted score. See 7406.3 Tracking Evaluation Scoresheet for calculations.
- 7409.4 Candidate must achieve a minimum score of 2.0 points in each of the following categories: 2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 7 and 10. A score of less than 2.0 points in any of those categories prevents the candidate from being certified as an O.T., even if s/he has achieved an overall evaluation score of 3.0 points or more.
- 7409.5 Candidate must achieve a minimum score of 2.5 points in each of the following categories: 4.1 & 4.2. A score of less than 2.5 points in either of those categories prevents the candidate from being certified as an O.T., even if s/he has achieved an overall evaluation score of 3.0 points or more.
- 7409.6 Candidate must achieve a minimum score of 3.0 points in each of the following categories: 1, 3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 8 and 9. A score of less than 3.0 points in any of those categories prevents the candidate from being certified as an O.T., even if s/he has achieved an overall evaluation score of 3.0 points or more.
- 7409.7 A tracking candidate may challenge or take the written test and/or field evaluation stations at any time that they are offered (with regard to sections 7408.3 and 7409.1).
- 7409.8 All field tests must be completed within thirty-six (36) months of date of submission of application for certification.
- 7409.9 It is the expectation of the tracking standards committee and the tracking evaluators that each and every candidate who participates in each and every tracking evaluation station is responsible to know, and be familiar with, all of the criteria used by the evaluators to assess a candidate's tracking skills. It is **NOT** the responsibility of the tracking evaluator to ensure that the candidate is aware of evaluation expectations, objectives, criteria, grading or other evaluation aspects.
- 7409.10 Upon successful review the Group Training Officer will obtain signatures and forward document 7406.1 - Application for Certification for Type 3 – Operational Tracker to the VDEM SAR Training Specialist, SAR Chief, or appropriate person(s). VDEM will then issue a new certification. That new certification expires three (3) years after the date of issue.
- 7409.11 Certification will be for a period of three (3) years as long as other prerequisites remain current.
- 7409.12 At any time that a prerequisite certification possessed by the certificate owner expires, the person's Tracker certification also expires.

7410 Recertification - Recertification will be accomplished by completing the following steps:

- 7410.1 Completing the O.T. Position Task Book (PTB) (COVSAR 7406.2), and all prerequisites outlined within section 7405.
- 7410.2 The Tracker will submit his/her PTB to the tracker's Group Training Officer for approval.
- 7410.3 Upon successful review the Group Training Officer will obtain signatures and forward document 7406.1 - Application for Certification for Type 3 – Operational Tracker to the VDEM SAR Training Specialist, SAR Chief, or appropriate person(s). VDEM will then issue a new certification. That new certification expires three (3) years after the date of issue.
- 7410.4 Retesting in the following field evaluation stations with scores, in combination with other field station scores on record, that meet or exceed those described in section 7407:
 - A. 7407.3.1 Aging Station
 - B. 7407.3.3 PLS/LKP Station
 - C. 7407.3.4 Sign Cutting Station
 - D. 7407.3.6 Sign Squares Station
 - E. 7407.3.8 Reporting as evaluated in Section 6.4 of COVSAR Tracking Standard 7300
- 7410.5 Any scores earned in field stations other than the ones listed above (e.g. 7407.3.2 Known/Unknown, 7407.3.5 Sign Interpretation, 7407.3.7 Tools and the written test) can and will be carried over into re-certification scoring calculations unless the candidate wishes to attempt to improve those scores by retaking any particular station.
- 7410.6 Field tests for recertification (described above) must be completed within thirty-six (36) months of date of application for recertification.
- 7410.7 The COVSAR Tracking Committee may grant a three-month certification extension to those trackers who have been actively engaged in the recertification process. Due to the limited opportunities for testing, location of testing, availability of evaluators, and variable weather conditions at time of testing, trackers who have attempted all required stations for recertification within thirty-six (36) months of their current certification expiration, may be provided a three (3) month extension to their certification upon its expiration. Within the three-month extension period, the tracker must complete and pass all of the required stations for their level of recertification. If the Tracker fails to complete and pass the recertification stations during this period, they will lose their current certification and will be required to retake all stations required to be a COVSAR credentialed tracker at any level.

7411 Reciprocity – reciprocity will be handled on a case by case basis due to the varying degree of possible experience and previous training individuals may have (e.g. currently certified as a National Association of Search and Rescue (NASAR) Tracker II). Typically this process will involve evaluating the individual against the Position Task Book and their current abilities. Once any gaps are identified, a training plan can be developed, and the individual can work toward certification. The Lead Evaluator may evaluate an individual, on a case by case basis, and determine that, due to his/her experience, a candidate may be certified as an Operational Tracker.