

Commonwealth of Virginia
Department of Emergency Management
Search and Rescue Training Program – Tracking Evaluation

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SUMMARY OF TRACKING EVALUATION ELEMENTS

This is a brief description of each element that contributes to the overall assessment for each tracking candidate's knowledge, skills and abilities. Additional information on the stations can be found in COVSAR Standard 7300 Search & Rescue Tracking Evaluation Supplement. Included in each element description are the categories to which the element contributes a score as well as an estimate of the time to complete the station (which includes station debriefing). All field evaluation stations are to be worked by the tracking candidate on an individual basis, even if there are several candidates working on the station simultaneously.

Aging Station – Several lines of tracks are placed from 0 – 72 hours old. Each candidate will estimate, to the best of their ability, the age of the tracks in each line. This station contributes solely to the Sign Interpretation – aging category score. Estimated time to complete this station is 1.5 hours.

Known/Unknown Station – This station is composed of two parts and candidates are given one hour to complete the station. In the first part, candidates are given 4 tracks. The candidates are to record, sketch and photograph the tracks without disturbing them. When tracking candidates proceed to the second part of the station, they are not allowed to go back to the first part. In the second part of the station there are several (up to 20) small boxes. The tracking candidate is then to determine, for each box, if the box contains one of the following (1) a track was made by a particular one of the four initial footwear patterns, (2) a track made by footwear different than any of the 4 tracks in part 1, or (3) there is no footprint at all in the box. Once all candidates participating in the station, the evaluator debriefs them all with answers to each box. This station contributes scores to the tools, track detection, identification, photographing and drawing categories. Estimated time to complete this station is 1.5 hours.

Signcutting Station – This station involves a length (approximately 200 feet) of a linear feature (a trail, road, creek bed, etc) along which the candidate is given one hour to search for clues and track lines that are less than 24 hours old. Once the candidate has completed the station, s/he conducts a debriefing with the evaluator. During the debriefing, the candidate communicates clues found, track lines found and direction of travel of the track line. Once the candidate completes the debriefing, the evaluator then walks the station with the candidate to show what clues and tracks the station contains. This station contributes scores to the track detection, clue awareness, humanimal, direction of travel, professionalism and communication categories. Estimated time to complete this station is 1.5 hours.

Sign Interpretation Station – This station involves approximately 15 to 20 questions about human, animal or other sign that is in the testing area. Any sign is fair game for questioning, but the focus of the questions are human sign or other sign that can be (or has been) misinterpreted as human sign. Once a question is presented, all candidates have a few minutes to determine their answer to the question individually, and present that to the evaluator. Once all candidates participating in the station have given their answers, the evaluator will then discuss the answer to the question with the candidates. This station contributes solely to the humanimal or sign interpretation category. Estimated time to complete this station is 2.5 hours.

Sign Squares Station – This station consists of 6 to 9 squares that are approximately 5 feet by 5 feet wide. The candidates may not touch or otherwise disturb anything within the squares. Candidates are to determine, for each square, if there are zero, one or two track lines (less than 24 hours old) going through the square, as well as the direction of travel of the track line. Candidates are give one hour to complete this station. Once the candidates give their answers to the evaluator, the evaluator will debrief the station by discussing which boxes had how many track lines and which way the track maker traveled. This station contributes to the track detection and direction of travel interpretation categories. Estimated time to complete this station is 1.5 hours.

PLS/LKP Station – This station is the most comprehensive of all of the stations. It consists of a PLS or LKP scenario set up by the evaluator. The candidate interviews the evaluator, approaches the PLS/LKP and follows any track line of interest. The candidate is given three (3) hours to complete the station. Once the candidate has completed the station, s/he debriefs with the evaluator. This station contributes scores to the tools, interviewing, PLS/LKP, track detection, clue awareness, humanimal, identification, aging, direction of travel, photographing, drawing, casting, trailing, clue management, professionalism and communication categories. Estimated time to complete this station is 3.5 hours.

Tools Station – This station is an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate and discuss tracking tools and how to use them. This station contributes scores to the tools, professionalism and communication categories. Estimated time to complete this station is 0.5 hours.

Written Test – This is a 100 question multiple choice test. Estimated time to complete this station is 1.5 hours.

Reporting – This part of the evaluation is conducted by the evaluation or tracking standards committee reviewing any tracking report(s) that the candidate submits for review. This element of the evaluation contributes solely to the reporting category.

Professional recommendation – This part of the evaluation is conducted by the evaluation or tracking standards committee reviewing recommendations submitted to the committee on behalf of a tracking candidate. There is a tracker recommendation form that is to be used for this element. This element contributes solely to the professionalism category.