Responsibilities of Field Assistant for NEK-9 SAR dog teams:

The dog handler’s responsibility is to determine how to search the area to maximize the dog’s chance of finding the subject using its nose. Field navigators assist the dog handler to execute their search plan and to provide subject care if found.

What Navigators need to do at search base (before starting):

1. Get briefed by handler on search area. Put your search area on topo and be sure significant waypoints get on your GPS. Draw adjacent search areas on your map and know what teams are in them.
2. Study your handler’s assignment and know what major topo & manmade features are in your assigned area. Be prepared and able to plot compass bearings for (brooks, trails, roads, perimeter of search area).
3. Determine escape route before starting area assignment.
4. Be sure you have GPS, radio, and cell phone (leave cell number with base). If you don’t have a GPS and/or a radio inform your handler and they will secure them for you.
5. Discuss radio and whistle protocol with your handler before starting. Keep radio traffic to a minimum but use it when needed.
6. Discuss with your handler your medical skills. You will be providing the primary patient care for many handlers until evacuation help arrives (unless they have a higher level of medical training).
7. Talk with handler to determine their search plan. Your handler will tell you how and where in relation to the dog they want you to search.
   a. The dog is our primary search tool. The handler and field navigator are adding their ears and eyes to the dog’s nose. Do not go off and “search” unless you have cleared it with your handler.
   b. You may be asked to be responsible for keeping the team on specific compass bearings. Know what compass bearing grids the dog handler wants to use for searching and work out with the handler how they want you to help keep the team on those bearings while searching.
   c. Let your handler know if you think the navigation of this plan isn’t right. Two good navigators are lots better than one!
8. Be the searching “eyes” for your dog handler – looking for clues, “evidence” and track.
9. Be aware of surroundings at all times and alert dog handler of any unsafe conditions or situations.

Handler responsibilities:
The handler will be responsible for instructing their field navigator regarding the following:

1. What extra clothing, food, water and medical supplies are needed between them to properly respond to the number of subjects and the potential injury?
2. What radio protocol they will use between themselves.
3. What whistle protocol will be used if doing trail or corridor searches*
4. Specifically what the handler wants the field navigator to be responsible for while they are searching. This might include:
   a. Keeping the team on the compass bearings determined by the handler and being expected to “know” where the team is at any time
   b. Blowing the whistle every 2 minutes
   c. Being the search eyes of the team.
   d. Where the navigator should be in relation to the dog/handler.
   e. How your dog works, alerts and behaviors to be aware of.
Subject is found:
If the subject is found, the handler will:

1. Assign the person with the highest medical skills to determine the subject’s condition.
2. The person not providing medical assessment/care will contact base:
   a. Ask if base is clear to copy (to be sure no family or press are present)
   b. Indicate nature of “tag” (Green tag=subject is found and is medically OK; red tag=subject needs medical care; black tag=subject is deceased)
   c. Provide UTM coordinates for location.
3. If the subject has medical issues, the UV Navigator should stay on the primary radio channel and be communicating to medical control. All other teams will move to the secondary channel as directed by base.

Navigator equipment:
Navigator needs to carry besides own ready pack:
- Topo map with search assignment
- Compass
- Whistle
- Radio
- GPS
- Flagging
- Glow sticks
- Water for self and some extra for K-9 if really hot and handler requests it
- Clothes/blanket for victim (work with handler to spread extra clothes between you)

Voice Contact:
Approximately every 2 minutes your handler will stop, and blow one long whistle blast. Everyone should stop moving, and when the single long blast is over. Listen carefully for 15 seconds. Have your compass in your hand while listening. Voice contact is very common when searching and we have to be using our ears all the time as well as when we stop. If the dog or handler or navigator hears anything, immediately take a compass bearing on the sound.

Whistle protocol between handler & navigator:
When search with dog handler, instead of using radio to find each other discuss using the following whistle code. These are SHORT blasts – not to be confused with stopping to blow single long whistle blast and listening for voice contact.

1. **Single short whistle blast** = identifies location and should elicit single blast response from other team member. This is how two searchers keep appropriate distance from each other.
2. **2 short whistle blasts** = means one searcher has stopped so the other should respond with two blasts and stop until restarted by a single blast.
3. **3 short whistle blasts** = come to this location now.