

K-9/Bomb Disposal Unit

The Essex County Sheriff's K-9 and Bomb Disposal Unit were established in 1987 as a part-time unit. Due to the increased call volume, the unit became a full-time 24/7 operational unit in 1994. Currently a captain commands the unit along with a sergeant overseeing each squad. All members of the unit work as one, responding to all calls for service, whether bomb or K-9.

The K-9 Unit has expanded over the years to its current staffing level of eight full-time K-9 handlers along with fourteen dogs. All K-9 handlers work two dogs, each a separate discipline. The K-9 disciplines are tracking, narcotics, firearms and explosives, arson, and search and rescue. We have a variety of K-9 breeds such as bloodhounds, German shepherds and Labrador retrievers. All K-9s are trained by our two in-house certified trainers. The K-9 Unit has trained various law enforcement agencies throughout the tri-state area. The unit continually conducts in-service training for outside agencies, which includes bi-annual re-certification. K-9 handlers consider their K-9 partners part of their own family with most K-9s residing at home with the officer. The K-9 Unit works closely with local police, as well as many federal agencies including, the Drug Enforcement Agency, US Postal Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

The Bomb Disposal Unit has also expanded since its inception to four full-time Hazardous Device Technicians. All technicians have gone through a lengthy and arduous training program. The six-week training program, located at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, is run by the Federal Bureau of Investigation along with the US Army. Every three years, technicians must return to Redstone for a re-certification course. The unit responds to a multitude of calls including bomb threats, suspicious packages, fireworks disposal, military ordnance and dignitary or event searches.

The unit has some very hi-tech tools such as three different types of robots. The robots are remote controlled and allow the user to handle a suspicious device without ever laying a hand on it.

The unit is a member of the New Jersey Render Safe Task Force, formed by the New Jersey State Police, which has allowed both units to receive training and equipment through federal grants. If a major incident occurs, we can be called to assist anywhere in the state. The Task Force was formed in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11th. As a result, all bomb squads are uniformly equipped throughout the state. The task force was activated during the Republican National Convention in New York City, working in various counties throughout the state.

Training is a must for all members of the squad. K-9 handlers train on a daily basis so that they and their K-9 partners are always prepared. Bomb technicians must always be informed of threats throughout the country, constantly practicing and honing their techniques.

The unit responds to over a thousand calls for service each year and that number increases every year.

REMEMBER NEVER TOUCH ANY SUSPICIOUS PACKAGE ALWAYS CALL THE BOMB DISPOSAL UNIT. IT IS BETTER TO BE SAFE THAN SORRY!

To reach the K-9 Bomb Disposal Unit, please call 973-621-4111.