

# **INTERNATIONAL POLICE CANINE ASSOCIATION**

## **BOARD ORDER 2026-01**

### **FENTANYL ODOR CERTIFICATION PROTOCOL**

#### **NARCOTIC CERTIFICATION STANDARDS**

##### **I. Certification of Narcotic Handler and Dog Teams**

- A. Certification of narcotic dog teams shall be limited to current law enforcement personnel only & authorized private sector.
- B. Certifications will be valid for one year from the date of certification.

##### **II. Qualified Certification Officials**

- A. The IPCA Board of Directors will designate certification officials.
  - 1. Each certification official will have a minimum of five years' experience training detection dogs, including a minimum of two years of narcotic dog training. From time to time, the IPCA Board of Directors, in its discretion, may waive certain requirements.
- B. Certification officials will designate the areas to be tested and will coordinate with the host agency to obtain these areas.
- C. The certification official will be responsible for coordinating with the host agency to obtain narcotic training aids to be used in the test procedure.
- D. The certification official will be responsible for ensuring all safety precautions are adhered to by all people involved in the certification process.
- E. Certification officials will evaluate the following areas during the examination.
  - 1. Does the canine recognize the narcotic odor?
  - 2. Does the canine alert to the narcotic odor?
  - 3. Does the handler recognize the canine alert?
  - 4. The working ability of the dog, to include scent recognition and indication.
  - 5. Overall performance demonstrated by the certifying narcotics canine team.
- F. At any time, the certification official can terminate the search for cause.
- G. Once the canine team is deployed, the search time for each search area will not exceed seven minutes.

H. All certifications will use the single blind method.

### **III. Narcotic Canine Testing Area**

A. The tests will be set in as practical a manner as possible using 'live' buildings, areas, etc.

B. The tests should include:

1. Building search

a. Buildings, warehouses, residence or any other structure utilized as a certification site shall be no less than 1,000 square feet per individual search area and shall have furniture or other articles present in the search area.

2. Vehicle search

a. The word 'vehicles' as used for the purpose of this certification shall include any passenger car, truck, or van. During the vehicle search, three vehicles must be present.

3. Area Search

a. Area searches shall include all areas surrounding a structure or any route search where narcotics could be concealed.

4. Luggage/Parcel Search

a. A luggage/parcel search shall be described as any search containing at least ten, but no more than twenty, containers that could conceal the narcotic odors.

Examples of containers are boxes, luggage, crates, cans, etc. These containers will be evenly spaced throughout an area allowing the dog to freely move from container to container.

### **IV. Narcotic Substances**

A. All aids used in testing should be stored in separate containers.

The certification will contain the following narcotic odors:

1. **Heroin** – black tar or powder

2. **Cocaine** – powder or rock

3. **Methamphetamine** – powder or ice
4. **Marijuana** - OPTIONAL
5. **Opium** – OPTIONAL
6. **Fentanyl**- OPTIONAL
7. **3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA)**- OPTIONAL

B. The maximum weight of the narcotic aids placed shall be unlimited; however, a **minimum of 20gms** of substance shall be used for each aid for certification.

### C. **Fentanyl Certifications**

1. Due to the increasing prevalence of fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances encountered by law enforcement personnel, the International Police Canine Association (IPCA) established the following protocol governing the use of fentanyl odor during IPCA canine team certifications. All existing IPCA narcotics certification procedures remain in effect except as specifically modified under section IV(C).

2. Training and certifying detection dogs for fentanyl is a highly specialized process governed by **stringent legal, ethical, and safety protocols**. Agencies adhere to structured procedures to ensure both **canine** and **handler safety**, while maintaining **operational reliability**.

3. Certification involving **street-grade fentanyl powders** necessitates greater rigor than standard narcotics-detection training, as the odor profiles of illicit fentanyl mixtures are notably varied. Crushed or pulverized tablets shall not qualify as street-grade fentanyl powder.

As such, agencies implement comprehensive protocols to guarantee **safety, legal compliance**, and **reliability** in operations.

4. The following framework represents the **accepted methodology used by IPCA**:

When certifying dogs with **street-grade fentanyl powders**, agencies must ensure:

- The substance originates from a **DEA-licensed** or otherwise legally authorized source,
- It has been **tested and verified by a certified forensic laboratory**,
- Documentation includes:
  - Chemical composition,
  - Purity levels,

- Presence of cutting agents,
- Identification of known hazards.

5. This documentation is essential because street fentanyl is rarely pure; it frequently contains substances such as heroin, xylazine, benzodiazepines, or inert fillers. Dogs must be trained to recognize the **real-world odor signature** rather than pharmaceutical-grade fentanyl alone.

6. At this time only fentanyl odors sold by **Precision Explosives** and **street-grade fentanyl powder, tested and verified by a certified forensic laboratory** and **double-contained** (such as TADDS™ or an odor-permeable containment device designed for professional canine training and testing equivalent) packages will be allowed for IPCA certifications.

7. Accordingly, **fentanyl** will be the only odor that is subject to IPCA canine team certification which will allow for the use of a **simulated fentanyl odor**. All other established protocols for other target odors that are, or could be, part of a IPCA narcotics canine certification shall remain unchanged.

8. If a canine has a current/valid IPCA Narcotics Certification - the fentanyl odor may be added as a stand-alone certified optional odor. A current certified narcotic canine team does not need to repeat the entire certification process.

9. The initial fentanyl certification remains valid until the current narcotics certification expires. If the canine team recertifies, all required orders must be tested for narcotics certification.

10. Placement of fentanyl odor, in a safe manner, in any of the certification search areas shall be the same as any other target odor regardless of if it is mandatory or optional.

11. Training aids are required to be **double-contained** (such as TADDS™ or an odor-permeable containment device designed for professional canine training and testing equivalent) and must release odor without emitting particulate matter. Improvised containers such as plastic bags, open packaging, or unsecured vessels shall not be permitted.

12. Due to the unpredictability and ease of aerosolization of street powder, strict protective measures are enforced:

**For handlers:**

- Use of nitrile gloves, eye protection, and respiratory protection as dictated by the environment,
- No open handling of loose powder,
- Utilization of sealed, scent-permeable containers exclusively,
- Immediate decontamination protocols for surfaces and equipment,
- Ready access to naloxone for emergency response.

**For canines:**

- Dogs are **never** exposed to airborne powder,
- Only odor-permeable containers are employed,
- No direct contact permitted with contaminated surfaces,
- Veterinary oversight is maintained to mitigate exposure risks.

**13. Ingestion, inhalation, or mucous-membrane exposure—not skin contact—presents the primary risk.** The variability of street-grade powder heightens this risk due to unknown particle size and potency.

D. Evaluators and certification officials shall implement reasonable procedures to prevent cross-contamination of certification search areas, training aids, vehicles, containers, and equipment.

E. All narcotic aids shall be placed in search areas for at least thirty minutes prior to the first search team starting certification.

F. No narcotic aid shall be placed at an elevation higher than six feet, unless it can be accessed by the canine.

G. Verification of the presence of a narcotic odor will be conducted prior to deployment of the first search team.

H. Each search area will have zero to two finds, with one area or vehicle being blank.

I. All listed substances will be included in the certification in any combination designated by the certifying official.