

Response to Concerns Voiced from Comments on Canine Training and Peroxides

by Dr. Kirk Yeager,
FBI Explosives Unit

In the recent issue of *The Detonator*, Daniel G. Murphy addressed the subject of canine training and peroxides in his column outlining Region III news. This same subject was brought out by Mr. Murphy in his Region III newsletter. In both these columns the following statement appeared;

“A word of caution is in order here, as I hear that there are chemists and other organizations out bringing peroxide explosives to the local dog handlers for training purposes. While on the surface, this seems laudable, it can actually be counter-productive. Make sure, that when you are introducing and imprinting your dog on peroxides, or any new odor, that it is done under the supervision of a qualified trainer. Chemists without dog trainers is ill advised.”

As a result of this comment, I have received numerous calls expressing concern that this statement was intended as a criticism of the FBI initiative to help facilitate training in peroxide explosives. To keep this issue from developing a life of its own, I have decided to put out this response and accompany it with an article outlining the FBI program as it stands to date. This is done with the hope that any lingering rumors and idle conjectures can be laid to rest once and for all.

In one regard, I cannot agree more with Mr. Murphy. When introducing a new odor, a qualified trainer should be present. This protocol is one of the cornerstones of the FBI initiative. The only “training” conducted by FBI personal as part of the peroxide initiative is in the technical details entailed in the preparation, terrorist/criminal usage, and safety issues surrounding peroxide explosives. As explosives experts, FBI personnel limit their instruction to that field of expertise. In no fashion does the FBI train or certify explosive detection canine teams. That is left to the qualified trainers associated with the agency/agencies which have requested access to the peroxide explosives from the FBI.

The FBI establishes protocols only for the safe handling and utilization of the peroxide explosives applied in this program. It does not dictate protocols for any of the aspects of the canine training. Though the canine community is working on consensus-based national standards through SWGDOG (www.swgdog.org), there are currently no set standards to judge the credentials of canine trainers or the veracity of different

training protocols utilized by trainers. The FBI is cognizant that disagreements exist in the canine field on the best methodologies to apply in training. However, it would be negligent of the FBI to deny exposure to the peroxide explosives to any agency requesting assistance due to another agencies disagreement with their training protocols.

Shortly after I received notification of the statement put out by Mr. Murphy, I personally called him to determine if his statement was made in reference to the FBI peroxide initiative in which I maintain supervisory responsibility. He assured me that his statement was not intended as a criticism of the FBI program. He mentioned several other programs, such as the cotton ball training aids in circulation, which he had concerns with. I share those concerns, and join him in advocating caution in how one approaches training on peroxide explosives.

For those who remain skeptical about the intentions of Mr. Murphy’s statement, politically motivated or otherwise, I can only say that I trust his word. It would have been foolish and unprofessional for him to have made derogatory statements about a technical program he had not obtained complete information about. After talking with him, I do not believe this was his intent and consider the issue a simple misunderstanding. I am currently working with Mr. Murphy to establish the FBI initiative in his area. I thank everyone for their concern and hope that the full article will serve to address any outstanding issues. As always, any queries can be addressed to kyeager@leo.gov. 🍷