

MTA / Sheriff's Search and Rescue Dog Starts His Training

By MIKE PARKER

(July 5, 2002) The newest addition to the MTA's transit safety efforts is a four-legged friend named "Jack."

Jack is a black Labrador Retriever who was specially bred in Europe to be among the best and brightest dogs capable of rigorous and demanding search and rescue training.

Arriving at LAX on June 21, the Sheriff's Department rolled out the red carpet for 15-month-old Jack. Within his first few days, he had met with other "top dogs," including CEO Roger Snoble and Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau Capt. Dan Finkelstein.

The LASD and MTA were fortunate to have obtained Jack. Although law enforcement agencies are given priority for search dogs, there is a shortage. Many dogs from across the nation were injured searching at the World Trade Center site in New York, and demand for new dogs is high.

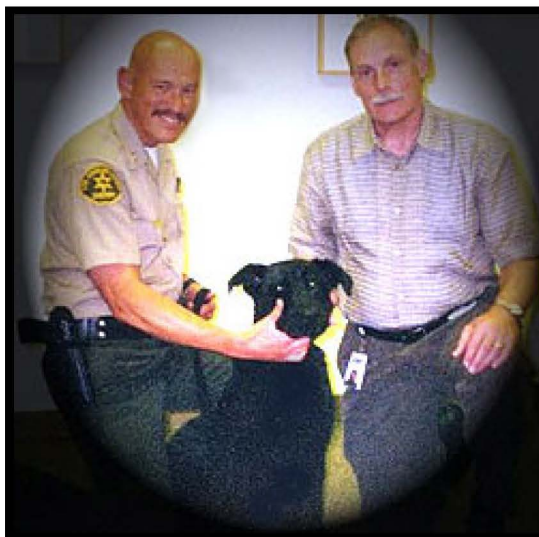
And, since the LASD found the dog for the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) instead of the other way around, the MTA and Sheriff's Department were placed at the top of the priority list for a FEMA grant, which pays for the dog and all training.

The first exam Jack had to pass was a demanding series of tests held locally to assess his temperament and intelligence.

Physically strong and healthy

Search dogs must have a strong drive and be physically strong and healthy, as well as have a good command presence. A dog must not bite even when provoked, and has to stay focused on the search mission. Only one out of 100 dogs can pass the screening test, but Jack's special breeding helped him succeed.

The new search dog's missions will include finding people in collapsed buildings as well as tracking missing persons. A well-trained search dog's tracking abilities are better than even the most technologically advanced mechanical devices.



■ Above, Jack takes a meeting with CEO Roger Snoble, right, and Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau Capt. Dan Finkelstein. Below, Jack tours Rosa Parks Metro Rail Station with Sheriff's Deputies, from left, Jason Buckley, Tomas Rodriguez, Bob Nuse and Mark Lindsey.



A trained dog can be used to track a lost child through eight successive rail passenger stations. In fact, a search and rescue dog recently tracked the path of a lost Alzheimer's patient for over eight miles.

Jack's duties also will include spending time in local classrooms educating youths about rail and bus safety, as well as respect for the MTA employees who make the system run. Dogs have a way with kids and adults, and Jack and his soft fur can help send the right message.

After being hounded by fans all week, Jack started his six months of challenging training in Northern California, June 25th. Once he graduates, Jack will be visiting Metro Bus and Metro Rail divisions to check out his new digs and meet his MTA family.

In the meantime, look for periodic updates on Jack's progress towards earning his canine deputy sheriff's badge as the MTA's and Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau's first Search and Rescue dog.

- Mike Parker is a lieutenant in the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau.

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