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General Guidelines for Training, Certification, and Documentation of Canine Detection Disciplines



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Foreword

This document serves as a baseline for the general protocols for training multiple canine disciplines. Discipline specific guidelines can be found within their respective discipline specific documents.

This standard was revised, prepared, and finalized by the Dogs and Sensors Consensus Body of the AAFS Standards Board. The Dogs and Sensors Subcommittee of the Organization of Scientific Area Committee (OSAC) determined that initial training, certification, and documentation guidelines should be established for detection canine disciplines as no industry standards currently exist. This document is based on the Scientific Working Group on Dog and Orthogonal detector Guidelines (SWGDOG) approved SWGDOG SC 2 – General Guidelines¹.

All hyperlinks and web addresses shown in this document are current as of the publication date of this standard.

Key Words: *initial training, canine team assessments, canine certification, maintenance training, record keeping and document management, terms and definitions, references, cases and legal references, alert, change of behavior, disclosure, certifying official, olfactory.*

¹ https://www.nist.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2018/04/25/swgdog_general_guidelines.pdf

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General Guidelines for Training, Certification, and Documentation of Canine Detection Disciplines

1 Scope

This standard contains requirements for the development of training of canine handlers and canines and will also detail the canine team assessments and the basis for certification procedures including record keeping and document management. This standard does not cover discipline specific guidelines.

2 Normative References

There are no normative reference documents, Annex A, Bibliography, contains informative references.

3 Terms and Definitions

For purposes of this document, the following definitions apply. For additional terminology see ASB TR 025, *Crime Scene/Death Investigation – Dogs and Sensors – Terms and Definitions*.

3.1

canine handler

A person who has successfully completed a recognized course of canine handling in a specific discipline and maintains those abilities through field applications, maintenance training, certification, recertification and department, agency or organization required continuing canine education.

3.2

canine handler error

Any action or cue by the handler that causes the canine team to perform incorrectly.

3.3

canine team assessment record

The documentation of an evaluation conducted during training.

3.4

certification component

An element of the odor/scent recognition or operational assessments.

3.5

certifying authority

The organization authorizing the certification of a canine team.

3.6

certifying official/assessor

A person who has been delegated the authority to conduct an evaluation and/or sign certificates on behalf of an organization or entity, that recognizes a team has been trained to a particular standard within the organization.

3.7

cognitive bias

A set of influences that may affect the reliability and validity of one's observations and conclusions.

3.8

competent trainer

A person having suitable or sufficient skill, knowledge, and experience to train canines and canine handlers, who has demonstrated, through education, training, and operational experience, extensive skills and knowledge in the subject field or discipline. This person would normally perform the maintenance training and proficiency training in the field and may train canines in preparation for a formal course of instruction.

3.9

confirmed operational outcome

Verification of search results following a deployment of a canine team(s).

3.10

controlled search

An experiment/training/testing exercise in which any defined variable(s) is consistent within specific parameters.

3.11

corrective action plan

A training course of action to remediate performance deficiencies with a canine team.

3.12

discipline-related deployment record

A record of the use of a trained canine team in an operational environment, as opposed to training records. A log constituting a piece of evidence about the past, especially an account of an act or occurrence kept in writing or some other permanent form, i.e., digital format. A log record of the use of a trained canine team in an operational environment, as opposed to training records (also called record, utilization log and record, and discipline-specific deployment log).

3.13

double-blind assessment

Scientific usage: This condition occurs when neither the experimenter/canine handler, nor the observer/evaluator, knows which treatments/manipulations are given to which subjects.

Operational usage: In the evaluation of a canine team, neither the assessor nor the canine handler knows the location of the target odor/scent or whether target odor/scent is present (i.e., a blank/null search).

3.14

false alert

An indication/trained final response demonstrated by the canine in the absence of the target odor/scent; a situation in which the canine exhibits the trained final response in the absence of the odor/scent on which he or she was trained to find.

3.15**final response**

A behavior that a canine has been trained to exhibit in the presence of a target odor/scent source. This behavior may be either passive (sit, stare, down, point, etc.) or active (bite, bark, scratch, etc.). Also known as a trained final response.

3.16**initial training**

The fundamental training associated with detector canine training which consists of, but not limited to: bonding/relationship building, obedience, basic odor/scent discrimination, and basic search techniques.

3.17**natural distractors**

Distractor odor(s)/scent(s) that are naturally occurring in the search environment that are not placed by evaluators, observers or participants. Animal remains that were not placed by someone, holes that were dug by wild animals, feces from other animals, etc.

3.18**non-productive response**

A change of behavior of the canine followed by a positive indication which cannot be confirmed by the canine handler. This may be the result of residual odor/scent that the canine can detect but which cannot be confirmed by technology or direct observation. A non-productive response may also be an error—a false positive—but these outcomes cannot be distinguished in an operational environment.

3.19**odor**

Volatile chemicals emitted from a substance that are able to be perceived by olfaction.

3.20**odor/scent recognition assessment**

A test of the canine's ability to alert to target odor(s)/scent(s) in a controlled environment.

3.21**objective-oriented training**

Training to enhance a canine team's proficiency using specific goals established prior to the initiation of the training.

3.22**operational assessment**

A test conducted (single- or double-blind) in an operational environment in which the canine team will be deployed or utilized.

3.23**operational proficiency**

Training conducted beyond the initial training of a discipline, designed to maintain a high level of competence or skill by ensuring the team's capability to perform desired tasks.

3.24

positive alert

A trained detection alert in the presence of the target odor/scent.

3.25

scent

Volatile chemicals emitted from a live human that are perceived by the canine through olfaction.

3.26

single-blind assessment

An evaluation of the canine team's ability to complete an exercise where the evaluator knows the outcome and the handler does not.

3.27

unconfirmed operational outcome

Lack of verification of search results following a deployment of a canine team(s).

4 Canine Team Requirements

4.1 Initial Training of the Canine Handler

4.1.1 The canine handler training shall be conducted by a competent trainer from an entity that utilizes a structured curriculum with specific training and learning objectives.

4.1.2 Canine handler training shall include, but not limited to the following:

- a) the ability to “read the canine” (interpreting the canine’s change of behavior to particular stimuli);
- b) the acquisition and processing of odor/scent by the canine;
- c) education on the various environmental conditions affecting odor/scent dispersion;
- d) canine handling techniques (e.g. voice inflection and lead handling);
- e) rewarding the canine;
- f) education on the aspects of cognitive bias;
- g) first aid for canine and handler;
- h) fitness for canine and handler, and
- i) relevant legal aspects to include:
 - effect of odor/scent dispersion;
 - relevant case law;
 - preparation of legal documentation; and
 - preparation for courtroom testimony.

4.1.3 The training shall be structured to meet the typical mission requirements of the canine team's department, agency, or organization, herein referred to as organization.

The canine team's training shall continue to maintain a level of operational proficiency and obtain and maintain organizational certification requirements (see Sections 5, 6, and 7).

4.1.4 Canine handler training may include techniques for collecting, handling, storing and disposing of articles and odor/scent evidence as required by the canine handler's organization.

4.1.5 In order to maximize search efficiency, canine handler training shall include search techniques.

4.2 Initial Training of the Canine

4.2.1 Canine training shall be conducted by a competent canine trainer from an entity that utilizes a structured curriculum with specific training and learning objectives. The training shall include, but not be restricted to the following.

4.2.1.1 Initial training shall include sufficient obedience training to ensure the canine will operate safely and effectively based on mission requirements.

NOTE Obedience training should include on- and/or off-lead control and responsiveness to verbal commands.

4.2.1.2 Initial training shall include sufficient control training to ensure the canine will operate safely and effectively based on mission requirements.

NOTE Control training should include on- and/or off-lead control and responsiveness to verbal commands.

4.2.1.3 The canine shall be trained to perform a pre-determined specific final response (active or passive alert) upon locating the trained odor/scent.

4.2.1.4 Initial training of the canine shall include exposing the canine team to a variety of locations, expected situations, and searches.

4.2.1.5 The canine shall be exposed to varying concentration/amounts of available odor/scent.

4.2.1.6 Training shall include exposing the canine to a variety of different noise, visual, and odor/scent distractors.

4.2.1.7 The canine shall be trained to perform a safe, effective, and controlled search.

4.2.1.8 The training shall be structured to meet the typical mission requirements of the canine team's organization.

4.2.1.9 The canine team's initial training shall be continued until the required level of operational proficiency is achieved and the canine team is certified. (See Sections 5, 6, and 7)

5 Canine Team Assessments

5.1 Assessments are part of certification, maintenance training, and proficiency testing.

5.2 Each assessment is the evaluation of a search.

5.3 The canine handler shall articulate the canine's final response prior to the start of the assessment.

The canine may not be able to make a final response due to the components and parameters of the assessment. Reasonable consideration by the assessor shall be given in these instances (e.g., the target is inaccessible for the canine to make a final response).

5.4 The desired outcome of the search is the correct identification of the number and placement of the target odor/scent by the canine team.

5.5 The canine team shall be assessed in the following ways.

5.5.1 The assessments in this section are intended for *single blind assessments*.

5.5.1.1 *Odor/scent recognition assessments* shall test the following.

5.5.1.1.1 The ability of the canine to detect the trained odor/scent while discriminating from non-trained odor/scent.

5.5.1.1.2 Demonstration of the canine's ability to perform a systematic search.

5.5.1.1.3 Demonstration of the canine handler's control of the canine during the execution of a systematic search.

5.5.1.1.4 The canine handler's interpretation of the canine's behavior while searching.

5.5.1.1.5 The canine's final response.

5.5.1.1.6 The canine handler's interpretation of the canine's final response.

5.5.1.1.7 The odor/scent recognition assessment shall consist of the following components and parameters.

5.5.1.1.7.1 The canine handler shall be advised of the parameters of the assessment.

5.5.1.1.7.2 The canine handler may know the total number of target objects, but not the placement for the totality of the exercise(s).

5.5.1.1.7.3 The assessor shall know the correct outcome of the assessment.

5.5.1.1.7.4 The canine handler shall not know the correct outcome of the assessment.

5.5.1.1.7.5 The assessor shall observe the canine team. At the conclusion of the assessment, the assessor shall compare the search results with the parameters of the search. This comparison may

be done immediately after the handler determines the canine has made its final response, or at the conclusion of the entire assessment.

5.5.1.1.7.6 The assessor may take into consideration the environmental influences on the scent in determining whether or not the canine team has successfully completed the odor/scent recognition assessment.

5.5.1.1.7.7 Successful completion of the odor/scent recognition assessment requirements are detailed in the discipline specific standards.

5.5.1.1.7.8 Failure of the odor/scent recognition assessment requirements are detailed in the discipline specific standards.

5.5.1.1.7.9 The assessor can fail the canine handler team if it is determined that the canine is no longer actively searching.

5.5.1.2 *Operational assessments* shall test the following.

5.5.1.2.1 The ability of the canine to detect the trained odor/scent while discriminating from non-trained odor/scent.

5.5.1.2.2 Demonstration of the canine's ability to perform a systematic search.

5.5.1.2.3 Demonstration of the canine handler's control of the canine during the execution of a systematic search.

5.5.1.2.4 The canine handler's interpretation of the canine's behavior while searching.

5.5.1.2.5 The canine's final response.

5.5.1.2.6 The canine handler's interpretation of the canine's final response.

5.5.1.2.7 The operational assessment shall consist of the following components and parameters.

5.5.1.2.7.1 The canine handler shall be advised of the parameters of the assessment, yet shall not know the desired outcome.

5.5.1.2.7.2 The canine handler shall not know the number or placement of the target objects.

5.5.1.2.7.3 The assessor shall know the desired outcome of the assessment.

5.5.1.2.7.4 The assessments shall include at least one blank search.

5.5.1.2.7.5 A mission-oriented assessment environment shall be used.

5.5.1.2.7.6 The assessor shall observe the canine team. At the conclusion of the assessment, the assessor shall compare the search results with the parameters of the search. This comparison may be done immediately after the handler determines the canine has made its final response, or at the conclusion of the entire assessment.

5.5.1.2.7.7 Successful completion of the operational assessment requirements are detailed in the discipline specific standards

5.5.1.2.7.8 Failure of the operational assessment requirements are detailed in the discipline specific standards.

5.5.1.2.7.9 The assessor can fail the canine handler team if it is determined that the canine is no longer actively searching.

5.5.2 The assessments in this section are intended for *double-blind assessments*.

NOTE When a double-blind assessment is conducted, it shall be conducted with considerations for safety.

5.5.2.1 Odor/scent recognition and operational assessments can all be conducted double-blind following the components and parameters described in Section 5.5.1.

5.5.2.2 Unlike the assessments described in Section 5.5.1, neither the canine handler, nor the assessor, nor any individual present with the canine team shall know the correct outcome of any portion of the assessment, including whether the search area(s) is a blank or includes a trained odor/scent.

5.5.2.3 The canine team shall be required to successfully complete the assessment as defined by the assessing agency.

5.5.2.4 The assessor shall observe the canine team. At the conclusion of the assessment, the assessor shall compare the search results with the parameters of the search. This comparison may be done immediately after the handler determines the canine has made its final response, or at the conclusion of the entire assessment.

5.5.2.5 The canine team should be required to complete a double-blind assessment every six months.

5.5.2.6 Any double-blind assessment may be used for proficiency testing.

6 Canine Team Certification

6.1 Certification for the named canine team shall be valid for up to one year (365 days or 366 in a leap year).

6.2 The canine team shall perform regular documented maintenance training, periodic proficiency assessments, double-blind assessments, and follow other recommended local, state and/or federal guidelines. Certification does not remove the requirement for continuous proficiency training.

6.3 The certifying official(s) shall not be routinely involved in the day to day training of the canine team being evaluated.

6.4 For successful certification, the canine team shall achieve at least a 90 % positive alert rate, unless otherwise dictated by the specific discipline, combined with a false alert rate as identified by the disciplines (distinct objects search versus continuous area search). Positive and false alerts are defined and calculated as follows.

6.4.1 A positive alert is a trained detection alert in the presence of the target odor/scent. The rate is calculated as the number of positive alerts divided by the number of available targets. For example, if the certification has ten target odors/scents and the canine team identifies nine odors/scents, it will have achieved a 90% positive alert rate.

6.4.2 A false alert is an alert in the absence of the target odor/scent. This is determined in one of 2 ways and shall be defined before the evaluation, depending upon the nature of the detection task involved in the certification (distinct objects search versus continuous area search).

6.4.2.1 In disciplines in which certification involves searching a defined number of distinct objects (i.e., pieces of luggage, odor recognition cans, scent boxes, parcels, persons, vehicles) the false alert rate is calculated as the number of false alerts divided by the number of non-target objects, not to exceed 10% in the overall certification. For example, if the certification test involves searching a set of 20 pieces of luggage and 4 vehicles in which 2 pieces and 2 vehicles contain targets and 20 are non-target objects/vehicles, and the canine team exhibits one false alert on a non-target, then the team's false alert rate is calculated as 1/20, or 5%.

6.4.2.2 In disciplines in which certification primarily involves searching continuous areas (i.e., warehouses, vehicle lots, aircraft, buildings) the number of distinct search objects within the continuous search area is immeasurable. The number of false alerts should not exceed one per continuous searchable area as defined by the specific discipline.

6.5 The certifying authority may fail the canine team due to handler errors and breaches of safety, which may include, but are not limited to, the following.

- a) Not maintaining positive control of the canine, which may lead to safety issues.
- b) Allowing canine outside of the search area.
- c) Not following directions of the assessor.

6.6 Deliberate compromise of an evaluation will not be tolerated. Any communication concerning specifics of the evaluation will constitute a compromise and will lead to termination of the canine team's certification.

6.7 A mission-oriented environment(s) shall be used.

6.8 Certification shall consist of an operational assessment and an odor/scent recognition assessment, or an operational assessment that incorporates all target odors/scents as defined by the specific discipline.

6.9 At least one certification component should be a double-blind assessment. Certification components that are not double-blind shall be single-blind assessments (e.g. odor/scent recognition and operational assessments) or non-blind (e.g. obedience and control assessments).

6.10 Aids and/or targets used in the certification process should not have been used in the day to day training activities of the team being certified.

6.11 A canine team that fails the certification process shall complete a documented corrective action plan before making another attempt to certify.

6.12 Certifying official(s) should identify the performance deficiency to the canine handler so that the trainer can determine the minimum amount of time for that deficiency to be remediated before another certification attempt.

6.12.1 During this remediation time frame, documentation should be provided by the canine trainer/handler to demonstrate that efforts have been enacted to correct the deficiency.

6.13 Organization(s) may enhance the recommended guidelines in order to make the requirements more stringent.

7 Canine Team Maintenance Training

7.1 The canine team shall conduct regular objective-oriented training sufficient to maintain and enhance operational proficiency that includes:

- a) enhancing the proficiency level of the canine team;
- b) correcting identified deficiencies;
- c) a variety of search locations, environmental conditions, weather conditions, and search area sizes;
- d) a varied duration of search times at different times of day or night;
- e) a variety of blank searches;
- f) a variety of odor/scent distractions and/or odor/scent distractors in the search area;
- g) a variety of set times;
- h) a variety of decoy(s)/suspect(s) where applicable;
- i) a variety of target odor/scent, amounts, number of targets and different sources of targets where applicable;
- j) a variety of degrees of concealment (behind a tree, behind a door, in a trunk of a car, above ground, in a tree, etc.);
- k) a variety of noise distractors (traffic, sirens, children playing, verbiage over a PA system, etc.).

7.2 Routine training conducted solely by the handler to maintain the canine's proficiency is acceptable, but not a best practice, and shall be combined with supervised training on a regular basis.

Supervised training by a competent trainer is required in order to improve performance, identify and correct training deficiencies, and perform proficiency assessments.

7.3 A canine team shall complete a minimum of 16 hours of training per month to maintain and improve the proficiency level of the canine team.

7.4 The canine team shall perform periodic proficiency assessments throughout the certification period as outlined in Section 5 - Canine Team Assessments, including a variety of odor/scent recognition assessments, operational assessments, single and double-blind assessments.

7.5 Training is meant to sustain, enhance, and promote the performance of the canine team.

7.6 Canine teams shall be challenged during the regular maintenance training sessions within the operational environments for which the canine team may be deployed.

8 Training Aid Storage and Handling

8.1 Handling and storage of training aids shall be conducted in a manner that prevents odor/scent contamination.

8.1.1 Target materials shall be stored in separate, individual, and labeled containers.

8.1.2 Target materials shall be stored individually and separately from non-target and masking odor/scent.

8.1.3 Training materials shall be appropriately disposed of and replenished as required and necessary due to odor/scent contamination and/or the perishable nature of the material.

8.2 Security of the training aids shall follow local, state, and federal guidelines.

8.3 Training materials shall be maintained in a manner to avoid loss or destruction.

8.3.1 Controlled training materials (e.g. narcotics, explosives, etc.) should be inventoried monthly by two persons.

8.3.2 Controlled training materials (e.g. narcotics, explosives, etc.) should be signed in and out by two persons.

8.4 Documented training should take place on the acquisition, handling, storing and disposing of target odor/scent.

9 Canine Team Records and Document Management

9.1 The canine handler/organization shall document training, certification, canine team assessments and discipline-related deployment data as relevant.

9.2 Proficiency assessments and training records may be combined or separate documents.

9.3 Discipline-related deployment records shall be separated from training, proficiency assessment, and certification documentation.

9.4 Training and discipline-related records should be standardized within the organization.

9.5 Canine team assessment records maintained by the canine handler/ organization shall include, but not be limited to, the following data.

a) Canine team assessment results.

- b) Deficiencies and corrective measures noted for future training.
- c) Date and time of canine team assessment.
- d) Location, environment, and weather conditions during assessment (i.e., urban, rural, wilderness, etc.).
- e) Location of target(s).
- f) Name of canine and canine handler.
- g) Name(s) of individual(s) conducting, assisting, or awarding assessment.
- h) Operational assessment design (single-blind, or double-blind).
- i) Other information required by canine team's organization.
- j) Set time.
- k) Target descriptor(s) (e.g. type, size, weight, gender, ages, ethnicity, stature, etc.).
- l) Time taken to complete assessment.
- m) The concealment of the target(s).
- n) The standard or guideline to which the canine team is assessed.
- o) Type and size of search area.

9.6 Certification records shall be maintained by the certifying authority and the canine handler, and shall include, but are not limited to, the following data.

- a) Canine team certification results.
- b) Certification authority (i.e., agency, professional organization, and/or individual(s)).
- c) Certification assessment design (single-blind, or double-blind).
- d) Date and time canine team certified.
- e) Deficiencies and corrective measures noted for future training.
- f) Location, environment, and weather conditions during certification (i.e., urban, rural, wilderness, etc.).
- g) Location of target(s).
- h) Name of canine and canine handler.
- i) Name(s) of individual(s) conducting, assisting, or awarding certification.
- j) Other information required by canine team's organization

- k) Set time.
- l) Target descriptor(s) (e.g. type, size, weight, gender, ages, ethnicity, stature, etc.)
- m) The concealment of the target(s).
- n) The standard or guideline to which the canine team is certified
- o) Time taken to complete certification assessment.
- p) Type and size of search area.

9.7 Training records maintained by the canine handler/ organization shall include, but are not limited to, the following data.

- a) Canine team search results.
- b) Deficiencies and corrective measures implemented during training regimen.
- c) Length of training session.
- d) Location, environment, and weather conditions of training (i.e., urban, rural, wilderness, etc.).
- e) Location of target(s).
- f) Name of canine handler and canine.
- g) Name(s) of individual(s) conducting or assisting with training.
- h) Other information required by canine team's organization
- i) Set time.
- j) Target descriptors and number of targets (e.g. type, size, weight, gender, ages, ethnicity, stature, etc.).
- k) The concealment of the target(s).
- l) Time and date of training.
- m) Training design (single-blind, or double-blind).
- n) Type and size of search area.

9.8 Deployment/utilization records maintained by the canine handler/ organization shall document the specifics of the deployment to include, but are not limited to, the following data.

- a) Date and time of deployment.
- b) Description of the search.
- c) Environmental conditions at deployment

- d) Information regarding any final response(s).
- e) Location check address (GPS coordinates are recommended but are optional) of deployment.
- f) Name of the canine and canine handler.
- g) Name(s) of organization(s) conducting search.
- h) Other information required by the canine team's organization.
- i) Requestor of deployment.
- j) Search results.
- k) Type and size of search area (urban, rural, wilderness, etc.).

9.9 Confirmed operational outcomes can be used as a factor in determining canine team's capability.

9.10 Unconfirmed operational outcomes shall not be used as a factor in determining a canine team's proficiency. Unconfirmed operational outcomes, including a non-productive response, may be relevant for investigative/testimony purposes because of the following.

9.10.1 Target odor/scent or residual odor/scent can be present but are below the measurable level of detection for laboratory instrumentation.

9.10.2 There may be an environmental inability or external factors which prevent locating the odor/scent source.

9.11 Supervisory review of all records is recommended.

9.12 Digitally formatted records (with appropriate back up), versus handwritten are recommended to facilitate compiling and analyzing data.

9.13 All documented training, assessments, certification, and deployments shall be documented to include final response, any false positives, and any false negatives.

9.14 Records may be discoverable in court proceedings and may become evidence of the canine team's reliability. Record retention policy shall be determined by the canine team's organization guidelines.

9.15 Training records are necessary to illustrate the type and amount of training that the team has experienced before and after certification.

9.16 Training aid records.

9.16.1 Training aids shall be clearly labeled in a manner to support accountability.

9.16.2 Appropriate records shall be maintained by the canine handler/ organization in accordance with federal/state/local requirements.

9.17 Veterinary records.

9.17.1 Veterinary records shall be maintained in a manner such as they are accessible to the canine handler/ organization.

9.17.2 Vaccinations required by state or local law shall be documented in the veterinary record of the canine.

Annex A **(informative)**

Bibliography

This is not meant to be an all-inclusive list as the group recognizes other publications on this subject may exist. At the time this standard was drafted, these were the publications available for reference. Additionally, any mention of a particular software tool or vendor as part of this bibliography is purely incidental, and any inclusion does not imply endorsement.

- 1] *Florida v. Harris*, Supreme Court of United States, October 2012 ²
- 2] ASB Technical Report 025, *Crime Scene/Death Investigation – Dogs and Sensors – Terms and Definitions*. 2017 ³

SWGDOG documents can be downloaded from:

https://www.nist.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2018/04/25/swgdog_general_guidelines.pdf

<https://www.nist.gov/topics/forensic-science/dogs-and-sensors-subcommittee>

² www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/12pdf/11-817_5if6.pdf

³ <https://www.asbstandardsboard.org/published-documents/>



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