



Deployment Report

Two New York-based Teams Search Apartment Building Collapse

June 19, 2017

When a four-unit apartment building fell in Utica, NY, canine teams deployed to search for survivors that may be buried beneath the rubble. This marked SDF's 156th deployment since our founding in 1996.

As rain fell on Monday, June 19th, New York Task Force 2 (NY-TF2) responded to a call that a two and a half story wood frame apartment complex had collapsed. Apparently abandoned, citizens feared that transients may have been inside at the time the structure gave way. With human life at stake, several canine handlers responded – two SDF graduates, two SDF Handler candidates that are expected to graduate later this year, and one non-SDF cadaver dog.

The SDF teams deployed were:

- 🐾 Brian Girard & Keila
- 🐾 Greg Gould & Dax
- 🐾 Adam Leckonby (Handler Candidate)
- 🐾 Brook Rowley (Handler Candidate)



Greg & Dax climb down the fire ladder from a 2-story window.

Here is Greg's report of the incident:

"The Utica Fire Department was concerned that there might be two homeless people inside. The neighbors had reported seeing two people sitting on the front porch and now they could not be located.

"Dax went in first and searched through the debris and then had some frustration barks in one location and he was showing that it was in a high location. I took Dax out and then used a fire department truck to get access to the second floor window. Dax climbed the ladder and searched the second floor and the pancake collapse from the roof and third floor area. Some of the second floor was still intact and was easily cleared by Dax. He did not show any interest from this location. Dax was taken outside and a runaway was performed (a game to keep Dax in "the game" when there are no people found). The ladder truck was moved to the A side (in the fire service, each side of a building is labeled for easy communication between rescuers) and Dax was sent again and showed no interest.

"Brian Girard and Keila arrived at this point and they were ready to work. This was their first deployment after passing their Type 1 certification on June 10, 2017. Brian sent Keila through the A side door and she searched the same area that Dax did and also had some frustration barks at the same location.

"We then utilized a cadaver dog from the New York State Police and he sent his dog through the same door and his dog barked in the same location. We then developed a plan to gain access to the area. A door was removed, a shore put in (to provide stability to the structure), and some debris was removed. We ran the cadaver dog first

and he had no alerts. We then sent Keila in and she showed no interest. Keila did a great job of covering the whole collapse. She shot up the stairs and covered a very difficult area – Brian was smiling the whole time in amazement as to what she was doing.

“Utilizing the three dogs proved to be a great tool. There were no people found.

“After we were done, a meeting was held and the decision to demolish the remains was made. We stood by on-scene until the building was completely down.

“We performed runaways for Dax and Keila to end on a positive note and they were both happy and filthy.”

What Brian had to say following his first deployment:

“It is hard to describe your partner’s first real world deployment other than sheer excitement. We train 2-3 days a week usually on sites that we have re-conned thoroughly and even stabilized at times before we deploy for their safety. In a real world deployment you don’t always have that opportunity, and to see your partner launch with that intensity even pushing debris out of her way with her front paws as she climbs stairs to go just a little bit further than the previous K-9 is awe-inspiring. When she disappears out of your sight into the debris pile, you have that terrifying instant where your heart stops. You forget about your safety and enter the unstable area to get sight of her again just to find her on the roof of the collapsed structure searching the rest of the pile and having a ball doing it.

“It is hard to decompress after something like this. I called Keila’s recruiter, sponsor, and her trainer after getting home. To hear the excitement and pride in their voices is a whole another experience.

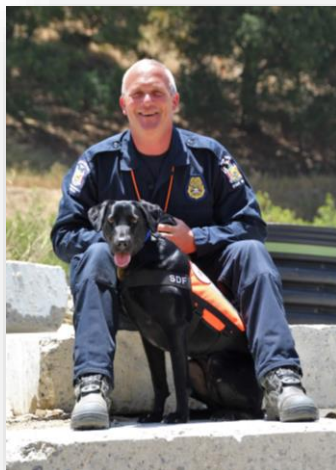
“This wouldn’t be possible if it wasn’t for everyone involved with the National Disaster Search Dog Foundation. From the recruiter, the sponsors, to the entire staff and volunteers at the foundation, everyone plays an important role in the lives of these amazing heroes and you all should feel the excitement during these moments.”

We are very proud of the work done by the Search Dogs, Handlers and New York Task Force 2. Thank you so much for being part of the SDF family and helping to assure these teams are prepared for times like these when they’re needed most.



Brian & Keila walk near the collapse site.

Brian Girard & Keila



Greg Gould & Dax

