



All the fire Department canines are trained to locate live people in collapsed structures and the trained canines here today were provided to the Fire Department along with training for their handlers at no cost to taxpayers by the private, non-profit Search Dog Foundation.

The San Francisco Fire Department Canine Search Teams are part of California Task Force 3, one of the 28 Federal Urban Search and Rescue Teams. The FEMA USAR teams respond to disaster and terrorism events throughout the country and the world.

Eli and Vader, and Garreth and Vita have been working together for three years and have achieved the highest certification possible. They were part of California Task Force 3's 80-person team responding to Hurricane Irma in 2017.

Lt. Garreth Miller and K9-Vita

- Garreth has been with the SFFD for 18 years and is assigned to Engine 29
- Vita was a stray in Sioux City, Iowa where she was picked up by animal control. She was rescued from a shelter and trained by the Search Dog Foundation



FF. Eli Thomas and K9-Vader

- Eli Thomas has been with the SFFD for 8 years and is assigned to Truck 12
- Vader was a stray from Rescue Ranch, Yreka. Vader was scheduled for euthanasia when the Search Dog Foundation discovered him. He was rescued from that shelter and trained by the Search Dog Foundation.



Firefighter Ed Martinez and K9-Fritz

Firefighter Martinez and Fritz are assigned to Station 4 in the China Basin District.

When this handsome Black Lab was picked up as a stray by animal control in Eugene, OR, the officers were sure that someone would claim this sweet dog as their lost pet. Fritz, as he was named, was housed at the county shelter on a “stray hold” to wait for his owners to claim him but no one ever showed up. Kirsten Fulk, a regional SDF Canine Recruiter with Field of Dreams Kennel found Fritz and evaluated him for the Search Dog Foundation (SDF). After completing the battery of tests, he passed with flying colors and Kirsten knew she had found a winner!

In January 2015, SDF Master Trainer Sonja Heritage completed a formal evaluation of both Fritz and Minnie. She noticed right away that he had a softer personality, but he LOVED to bark!

Fritz moved through his training quickly and really enjoyed finding the hidden “victims” and barking for his toy! Fritz was paired with his new handler, Ed Martinez of California Task Force 3 (CA-TF3), in September 2015. They achieved FEMA Certification a short six months later, which enables them to deploy nationwide in the event of a disaster.

In September 2017 Ed and Fritz were deployed for Hurricane Irma which hit Florida and the Virgin Islands, causing devastating damage as it made landfall as a Category 4 hurricane. Ed and Fritz deployed along with fifteen other SDF-trained canine teams to help search for people who may have gone missing since the storm struck. They spent nearly two weeks assisting citizens on the East Coast.

One year later, in September 2018, Ed and Fritz were deployed to Hawaii ahead of Hurricane Lane. Ed and Fritz weathered the storm and were prepared to help search if the need arose!

