



Accelerant Detection K-9 Keegan Retires

There has been a changing of the guard in the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department's Fire and Hazardous Materials Investigation Program. Accelerant Detector K-9 Keegan is retiring after six years of dedicated service.

Since 2012, Keegan, a Labrador retriever, worked alongside Investigator Terry Hall of the Fire Investigations Branch. Keegan's role was to detect accelerants used to start fires, which helps investigators to determine the cause of fires. He had a very successful career and was instrumental in detecting accelerants in several high profile cases, leading to the arrest of individuals responsible for setting the fires.

Keegan's successor, Berkley, is the fifth canine in FCFRD's canine program. He follows his predecessors, Ebby, Bert, Vanda, and Keegan in providing an extremely important service to the department. Berkley was trained for six months by retired Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) canine course developer, Charles "Bucky" Simpson of B-K9 in Texas. Berkley is certified by the Texas State Fire Marshal's Association and the International Canine Accelerant Detection Association (CADA) and is trained to detect more than 21 ignitable liquids that can cause fires.

Berkley is now working with Investigator Hall to develop the bond and trust required for a successful partnership. Berkley is also teaching Investigator Hall some new tricks; he is the first accelerant detection canine to be trained off leash and to respond to hand and whistle commands.

Fairfax County's canine program began in 1989 and is the longest continually running accelerate canine program in the United States. All dogs assigned to the investigations section are closely monitored by a veterinarian. In order to keep their skills sharp, they are trained every day by a food reward system when a successful detection or "alert" is accomplished.