



SANTA BARBARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

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NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

- Canine Search Teams Sent to Japan -

SANTA BARBARA, Ca. March 17, 2011 – A group of specially trained dogs, including one from Santa Barbara County Fire Department, is part of a 72-member Task Force sent from Los Angeles to Japan.



Canine teams that are part of the [National Disaster Search Dog Foundation](#) have spent this week in Ofunato City on the North East coast of [Japan](#) working from dawn to dark. Riley, who was born and raised in California, is one of six dogs who traveled to Japan with their firefighter-handlers to search the wreckage of the quake and tsunami hoping to find survivors. Riley is with the 72-member group from the L.A. Task Force that mobilized to the earthquake zone last Friday.

The firefighters said they wait for a "Bark Alert" which lets them know there is someone in need of rescue. SDF Founder Wilma Melville said the team in Japan right now knows how to work in earthquake zone.

"After the Haiti deployment, this is a battle-seasoned group. If there are people still alive in the rubble, the dogs will find them. I am so proud of every canine and handler out there combing the debris for signs of life, and feel confident in their abilities knowing they have had the best training possible and are at their highest skill level," [Melville](#) said.

Riley is a yellow lab that got bounced around in his early years because he was so rambunctious he proved to be too much for a couple families. But then he found the perfect fit at the Sundowners Kennel in [Gilroy](#) where they turned around all that energy for a good purpose in the SDF training.

SDF trainers said Riley's exuberance and constant desire to be doing something helped him sailed through training. His current handler is [Eric Gray](#) with the Santa Barbara County fire department.

It wasn't clear how long the dog will be deployed.

Story by Lori Preuitt

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