



Colorado Springs Police Department

General Order

220 Ride Along Program - Citizen Observer

Section 200 – Community Collaboration

Effective Date: 4/18/2022

Supersedes Date: 1/10/2022

.01 Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to describe the department's citizen observer ride-along program.

.02 Cross-Reference

[212 Cadet Explorer Program](#)

[DL-220-01 Ride-Along Program - Civilian Employee](#)

.03 Discussion

The department is committed to establishing a climate in which officers may perform their duties with the public's acceptance, understanding, and approval. The ride-along program is one of the most effective programs the department uses to help the community develop a greater understanding of an officer's job and the services the department provides. To promote trust between the police and the community, the department encourages community members to participate in the department's ride-along program as citizen observers.

.04 Policy

While ride-alongs involving citizen observers are encouraged, participation is a privilege. Citizen observers will adhere to the rules of the program. Those who don't adhere to the rules are subject to removal from the ride-along program.

The directives associated with this policy do not apply to civilian employees or volunteers whose positions allow them to ride along with a department member, noting the existence of other policies that govern the ride-along privileges associated with those positions.

.05 Definitions

Citizen Observer: Any member of the community who is not compensated by/volunteers for the department who is authorized to observe a member of the department in the performance of their duties. For the purpose of this policy, law enforcement officers not employed by the department and representatives from the news media are considered citizen observers.

Department Member: Any person who represents the department in an official capacity, whether compensated or a volunteer.

Ride-Along Tracking Database: An electronic database located on the *Patrol Drive* (under the *Ride-Along* folder) is used to track approved/denied applications and unusual incidents involving citizen observers.

.10 Age Restrictions for Ride Along Participants

Citizen observer applicants must be over 18 unless the citizen observer is an active member of a CSPD Citizen/Youth Advisory Committee or has obtained specific, prior permission from the division commander in which the ride-along will take place. In these cases, the minor's parent or legal guardian must also sign the agreement.

Persons under sixteen (16) years are not allowed to participate in the ride-along program.

.12 Applications

All citizen observer applicants will undertake the following steps before participating in the ride-along program:

- Complete a ride-along application and a release and indemnification agreement.
 - Applicants, including immediate family members, may request to ride with a specific officer; however, a final determination as to assignment rests with the on-duty supervisor.
- Turn in the application and the release and indemnification agreement at the division where the applicant intends to participate in the program.
- Present the completed paperwork to a police department employee at the division.
 - The forms must be notarized, a service that can be provided at the substation.
- Present a valid, government-issued ID/driver's license bearing a photograph of the applicant to the police department employee.

.14 Application Processing

The police department personnel receiving a ride-along application will be responsible for photocopying the applicant's identification card, which they will then attach to the application.

The assigned police department personnel will complete a background check of the applicant using the appropriate police databases. This information will be attached to the ride-along application to be used by the reviewing supervisor to determine an applicant's eligibility to participate in the program.

.16 Application Approval/Denial

All completed ride-along applications will be reviewed by a supervisor. [REDACTED]

Approved Applications

The patrol supervisor who approves an application will print their last name and IBM in the approval area of the application. The approving supervisor will then contact the applicant to inform them of the approval.

All approved applications are valid for two weeks after the approval has been granted. The ride-along must be completed within this two-week timeframe. After that timeframe, the entire application process must be completed again.

Police personnel will document all approved applications in the *Ride-Along Tracking Database*.

Denied Applications

If an application is denied, the reviewing supervisor will bring that information to the shift's/section's assigned lieutenant.

If the shift/section lieutenant agrees with the supervisor's recommendation, the lieutenant will contact the applicant to inform them of the denial and the reason behind it. The lieutenant will document their name, IBM, and the reason for the denial in the *Ride-Along Tracking Database*.

The lieutenant's decision is considered final and cannot be appealed.

.18 Retention of Paper Applications

Each division will maintain all applications, regardless of approval/denial status, following the department's record-keeping policy.

Patrol divisions will be responsible for maintaining an area at their duty desk dedicated to ride along applications, including a file for:

- Applications that have been approved and are pending.
- Those that are disapproved.
- Those that have already been completed.

.20 Identity Verification

For security reasons, on the day/time of an approved ride-along, a supervisor will verify the citizen observer's identity by comparing their physical appearance to the photocopied identification provided during the application process.

.22 Appropriate Attire

Citizen observers are encouraged to wear business casual clothing (e.g., slacks, collared shirts, etc.) but, at a minimum, will wear clothing that is clean/neat/appropriate and will not discredit the image of the department (e.g., torn/revealing clothing, clothing containing inappropriate insignia/language, etc.).

The supervisor will ensure the citizen observer's attire is appropriate to participate in the ride-along program. If deemed inappropriate, the supervisor will communicate that information to the citizen observer and allow them to comply with this directive. If arrangements cannot be made without affecting police operations, the supervisor may deny the ride-along. If the ride-along is denied, for this reason, the supervisor will work with the citizen observer to re-schedule their participation in the program, paying attention to the timeline outlined in *.16 Application Approval/Denial*.

.24 Length and Frequency of Tour

To permit as many people as possible to participate, citizen observers may be limited to one four-hour tour; however, this may be extended up to one entire shift at the discretion of an on-duty supervisor.

Citizen observers may participate in the ride-along program one (1) time in a twelve (12) month period. At the discretion of the division commander, current police officer applicants to the department may be authorized to ride with greater frequency.

.26 Safety

The safety of the citizen observer is of the utmost importance. As such, officers:

- Will briefly explain the operation of the police radio to the citizen observer should an emergency arise.
- Will not engage in a vehicular pursuit with a citizen observer in the vehicle.
- Will not allow the citizen observer to leave the patrol car when there is any apparent danger.
 - If a hazardous circumstance arises (e.g., a mass casualty event, civil disturbance/protest, etc.), officers may leave the citizen observer at a safe location (e.g., a police substation, an open and public establishment, etc.). The officer will notify the communications center of the citizen observer's location in such a situation.
 - As soon as reasonably possible, the communications center will arrange to have the citizen observer picked up by an officer.

.28 Weapons Prohibited

Under no circumstances will a citizen observer be armed with any weapon/firearm while participating in the ride-along program, even if they possess a concealed weapons permit.

.29 Limited Access

The United States Supreme Court has ruled it may be a violation of a property owner's Fourth Amendment rights for an officer to bring a citizen observer, who is not critical to the accomplishment of the police mission, into private premises without the property owner's permission. Accordingly, citizen observers are not permitted to accompany an officer conducting official business into a private dwelling or private business that is not open to the public without prior and specific permission of the owner/legal occupant of that property. This restriction applies to calls for service, the execution of search/arrest warrants, and any other time the officer enters private premises under the color of their police authority.

Officers will verbally request permission as circumstances permit and will not allow citizen observers onto the premises until permission is given. If consent is not provided, the officer will direct the citizen observer to remain in the police vehicle or other safe location.

Citizen observers are not restricted from accompanying officers into public places, consistent with safety considerations for both the observer and officer.

.30 Communications

Officers assigned a citizen observer will notify the communication center of their presence and the anticipated duration of the tour.

.40 Rules

Citizen observers will adhere to the rules of the ride-along program, as outlined in the *Ride-Along Program Letter*. Citizen observers will also comply with any safety considerations outlined by the assigned officer.

Rules of particular importance include:

- Citizen observers are prohibited from participating in any police activity, including conversing with any person contacted as part of official police business (e.g., prisoners, suspects, witnesses, victims, etc.), unless directed or permitted by the officer.
- Citizen observers will not critique or ask questions about how an officer handled a call for service during the call. The citizen observer may ask clarifying questions only after the call and only while outside the presence of the community members involved in the call.

.42 Recordings

Prohibited

Citizen observers will not make any audio or video recordings of activities experienced as part of the ride-along program without prior and specific permission from the host officer in each instance of recording. Citizen observers found to make recordings without permission will immediately be returned to the division, and their ride-along tour will be terminated.

When Permitted

When the host officer permits recordings, the citizen observer should be told that recordings having a legitimate evidentiary value in a criminal case could be seized as evidence. Such recordings will not be placed into evidence over the objection of the citizen observer unless authorized by a supervisor and in connection with an open criminal case. If given permission, the officer will not request or demand they be edited or erased.

.50 Improper Behavior and Unusual Incidents

All cases of improper behavior (e.g., failure to follow ride-along rules or safety directions) or unusual incidents (e.g., attempts to access prohibited information, etc.) involving a citizen observer will be promptly reported to an on-duty supervisor.

If the citizen observer becomes a hindrance to the officer in the performance of their duties, the citizen observer will be returned to the division and directed to an on-duty supervisor. The supervisor will then decide whether to terminate the citizen observer's participation in the ride-along program. The supervisor's decision is final and cannot be appealed.

.52 Documenting Improper Behavior and Unusual Incidents

In addition to notifying an on-duty supervisor of an incident, the officer will document the behavior/incident appropriately (e.g., memorandum, case report, incident report). The document will be forwarded through the chain of command, up to and including the division commander.

To aid in the communication between different patrol divisions, if the citizen observer attempts to participate in the ride-along program at another division, the supervisor who receives such a report will document the situation in the *Ride-Along Tracking Database* under the citizen observer's name.

.54 Documenting Injuries to Citizen Observers

If a citizen observer is injured while participating in the ride-along program, the assigned officer will be responsible for notifying an on-duty supervisor of the injury and documenting the circumstances in the appropriate report (e.g., case report, incident report, traffic report).

.60 Suspension of the Ride-Along Program

The ride-along program may be temporarily limited or suspended by a division commander if the program is deemed to interfere with a division's or shift's operational readiness. This includes during periods of intense training activity, such as the Police Training Program, and public health crises.

If the ride-along program is suspended, the division commander will notify the division's staff, including the reason for the temporary suspension and, if known, the approximate length of the suspension.

Applicants to the citizen observer program will be told of the temporary suspension when submitting their applications and advised when they may reapply.

Attachments

[Ride-Along Program Letter](#)

[Ride-Along Application/Release and Indemnification Agreement](#)