



GENERAL ORDERS: Chapter 28

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APPROVED BY: Chief Dana Wingert

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Ride-Along Program

I. Policy

The department has established a ride-along program to provide the opportunity for citizens to gain a better understanding of the law enforcement role in the community. Division commanders may grant exemptions to this policy.

II. Procedure

A. Eligibility

1. The applicant must be at least 16 years of age.

B. Application

1. Citizen-initiated request

- a. Will be directed to complete a ride-along application [form on the department website](#). Applications will typically be screened within 5-7 business days of receipt.
- b. Camera crews, photographers or journalists in an official capacity will first be referred to the Public Information Officer for further information.

2. Officer-initiated request

- a. Officer will have rider complete a [hard-copy Ride-Along Program Application and Liability Release Waiver form](#) and is further responsible for:
 - (1) Requesting a supervisor complete a background check
 - (2) Scheduling date/time and securing watch commander approval
 - (3) Sending the completed Ride-Along Program Application and Liability Release Waiver form to Patrol Headquarters following the ride-along

C. Restrictions

1. Participation in the ride-along program will be limited to twice every 12 months. This may be waived by the watch commander.
 - a. Participants will ride with an officer for no more than five hours. This may be extended at the discretion of the hosting officer or a supervisor.
2. Officers on probation are not allowed to have a ride-along.

D. Background check

1. The Patrol Support unit sergeant or designee will conduct a background check on citizen-initiated applications. The background check may include items such as:
 - a. Criminal history
 - b. Warrants, probation and parole
 - c. In-house records, including ride-along log
2. Items that may disqualify an applicant, include but are not limited to:

- a. A felony or misdemeanor record that involves moral turpitude, dishonesty or theft
 - b. Activities, involvements or associations that would be considered contrary to law enforcement ethics or compromise law enforcement operations
 - c. Any other just cause
- 3. The following are specifically exempted from the requirements of a background check:
 - a. Immediate family members of Des Moines police officers
 - b. Certified law enforcement officers
 - c. Elected or appointed government officials
 - d. Police department employees, interns, and chaplains
 - e. Members of the Community Ambassador Program (CAP)
- E. Approval
 - 1. Citizen-initiated applicants that are approved will be contacted by the Patrol Support unit sergeant or designee to schedule a date and time for the ride-along.
 - a. The Patrol Support unit sergeant or designee will ensure the Liability Release Waiver portion of the application is completed appropriately.
 - 2. The Patrol Support unit will notify the appropriate watch commander of the name of the participant along with the date and time of the scheduled ride.

III. Ride-Along Participant

- A. Requirements
 - 1. Clothing/Dress
 - a. The participant must present themselves in a neat and clean appearance.
 - (1) The hosting officer or a supervisor may rescind permission to ride if the participant's appearance or hygiene is unacceptable.
 - b. Participants will wear conservative clothing suitable for contact with the public and weather conditions.
 - (1) Examples of appropriate clothing: Neat and clean jeans (without holes or patches), collared shirt (no T-shirts), shoes and socks (no sandals), tennis shoes are allowed.
 - (2) At no time will participants be allowed to ride while wearing any clothing or accessory that has a negative or derogatory message.
 - c. Participants and police officers from other jurisdictions will not wear any clothing, insignia or item that may denote or cause a citizen to think the participant is a police officer.
- B. Restrictions
 - 1. Participants will not:
 - a. Carry or access any weapons (knives, OC Spray, taser, etc.)
 - (1) Exception: Certified US peace officers who are authorized to carry firearms may conceal carry the firearm.
 - b. Record any audio, photographs, or videos during the ride-along
 - c. Have direct involvement in police functions or conversation with members of the public (suspects, complainants, etc.) encountered during official duties of the officer
 - d. Enter any private residence or business during the execution of any warrant
 - e. Enter and/or remain in a major crime scene
 - f. Operate any department vehicle or use any departmental equipment
 - g. Use any type of tobacco products, including electronic cigarettes, during the ride-along

IV. Responsibility

- A. Officer

1. The officer shall advise the communications center that a ride-along participant is present in the vehicle before going into service.
 2. Officers shall not:
 - a. Except when unavoidable, share information that is intended only for dissemination to law enforcement officers
 - b. Restrict participants to the confines of the patrol car unless the officer feels there will be some danger or that the participant may interfere with the investigation. It is intended that the participant witness as much of the officer's activities as possible.
 3. When an officer must respond to an obviously dangerous situation they shall take reasonable steps to ensure the participant remains in a position of relative safety, as determined by the officer.
 4. The officer shall terminate the ride-along in a timely manner:
 - a. When so requested by the participant
 - b. At any time due to unusual duty conditions
 - c. Upon improper conduct on the part of the participant or if they are interfering with the officer's duties
 - (1) Any misconduct on the part of the participant shall be reported to a supervisor immediately.
- B. Supervisors
1. Sergeants are responsible for:
 - a. Assigning the patrol officer with which the participant will ride
 - b. Ensuring that all ride-along related paperwork is completed appropriately and returned to Patrol Headquarters
 2. Watch commanders:
 - a. May terminate, rescind or reschedule the ride-along at any time
 - b. Will maintain final discretion on rider assignments
- C. Patrol Headquarters
1. Approved Ride-Along Program Application and Liability Release Waiver forms will be maintained for three years from the ride-along date.
 2. Denied ride-along applications will be maintained permanently.
 3. Patrol Headquarters will track all completed ride-alongs or ride-along denials in the "Ride-Along Log."

V. Youth Public Safety Corps

- A. Eligibility
1. Must be at least 14 years of age and in good standing with the Youth Public Safety Corps program
- B. Restrictions
1. May not ride between the hours of 2300 and 0700 hours.
 2. Are limited to the number of ride-alongs set forth by the Youth Public Safety Corps program.
- C. Approval
1. Shall have a Ride-Along Program Application and Liability Release Waiver form on file.
- D. Dress
1. Shall adhere to this policy or may ride in their standard uniform.