



GENERAL ORDER

Loudoun County Sheriff's Office

Chapter: Operations

Section: 401.15

Subject: Operational Functions

Topic: Ride-Along Program

Enacted: 07/30/2015

Last Review: 04/28/2022

Review: 12/01/2023

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to establish guidelines regulating the conditions under which citizens are permitted to participate in the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office Ride-Along Program.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Loudoun County Sheriff to provide a Ride-Along Program. This program allows interested citizens to accompany deputies during their official duties so that they may gain a realistic view of a deputy's job with the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office. In order to do this in a safe and responsible manner, the following procedures are set forth.

III. PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

To participate in the Ride-Along Program, applicants must be, at a minimum, one or more of the following:

- A. A representative of a business or civic group
- B. An applicant for the position of Deputy Sheriff, or Auxiliary member
- C. Sponsored by a Deputy Sheriff
- D. Employed in a Loudoun County Government position that would benefit from having further knowledge of Sheriff's Office procedures and functions
- E. A participant of the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office's Citizen Police Academy or Lessons in Law Enforcement program
- F. A family member of a Loudoun County Sheriff's Office employee
- G. A college/university student where participation in a ride-along program is a mandatory requirement for course completion/credit.

In addition, applicants must demonstrate:

- A. A special interest that would benefit the Sheriff's Office, county government, or the citizens of Loudoun County

- B. An interest in learning more about law enforcement in Loudoun County

IV. PROCEDURES

No person shall accompany a deputy sheriff throughout the course of his/her duties without completing the following application process and receiving approval to participate in the program.

A. Application

1. All applicants shall complete the automated Ride-Along Program Application (LCSO Form 1.15A) and Waiver of Civil Liability and Indemnification Agreement (LCSO Form 1.15C), prior to the ride-along. The application shall be retained by the Ride-Along Program Coordinator for one year. The completed application must be submitted to the Ride-Along Program Coordinator at least seven (10) working days prior to the expected ride-along date. Misleading or false statements made by any applicant on the ride-along application shall be grounds for automatic denial of such application.
2. A criminal history record check, NCR LInX check, license check and local inquiry will be conducted on applicants. The Ride-Along Program Coordinator reserves the right to deny any application based solely on the results of the criminal history, NCR LInX, license check or local inquiry check (LCSO Form 1.15B). Any information obtained through these sources which cause an application to be denied shall be noted. Section V "Exemptions" contains additional guidelines.
3. No application for a ride-along will be approved if the individual has participated in a Loudoun County Sheriff's Office Ride-Along within the previous twelve (12) months. See Section V "Exemptions" for additional guidelines.
4. Applicants must be at least eighteen (18) years of age. Applicants under eighteen (18) must submit the Waiver of Civil Liability and Indemnification Agreement (Form 1.15C) signed by their parent or legal guardian with their initial application.
5. All applications will be reviewed by the Ride-Along Program Coordinator. The Coordinator shall also be responsible for completing a criminal history record check, NCR LInX check, IAU, license check and local inquiry on all applicants.

B. Conduct/Responsibilities

1. Supervisors shall ensure that any individual participating in a ride-along is advised of, and in compliance with, the instructions given on the Ride-Along Program Rules

and Regulations (LCSO Form 1.15D). In addition, the ride along participant will be issued a reflective vest identifying them as a civilian ride along.

2. A deputy assigned to the ride-along participant will ensure the participant displays proper conduct and will provide for the participant's safety. The deputy shall explain what action the participant is expected to take in the event of an emergency.
3. In accordance with agency policy, a field deputy shall not engage in any pursuit while a civilian passenger is in an agency vehicle. If the participant is assigned to a patrol deputy, the participant may be required to exit the cruiser prior to responding to selected emergencies at the deputy's discretion. In this circumstance, the field deputy must find a safe location to leave the ride-along participant. The ride-along participant shall wear a seatbelt when in an agency vehicle.
4. Any misconduct on the part of the ride-along participant shall be reported to a supervisor immediately. The shift supervisor or ride-along deputy may terminate the individual's privilege to ride-along at any time. If the ride-along is terminated, the reason(s) will be documented in the IBR completed by the deputy.
5. Ride-along participants are not permitted to be involved in any law enforcement action (i.e., search, arrest, interview suspects, etc.) unless a deputy specifically requests assistance in accordance with the following provision of the Code of Virginia:

§ 18.2-463. Refusal to aid officer in execution of his office – If any person on being required by any sheriff or other officer refuse or neglect to assist him: (1) in the execution of his office in a criminal case, (2) in the preservation of the peace, (3) in the apprehending or securing of any person for a breach of the peace, or (4) in any case of escape or rescue, he shall be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor.
6. Ride-along participants shall not be permitted to remain with prisoners in the absence of deputies.
7. The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office will provide all ride-along participants with approved identification, which must be worn at all times while participating in the ride along.. When asked, participants shall identify themselves as an authorized citizen observer or a ride-along. Agency personnel riding with sworn personnel need not wear the identification if they are in proper uniform or wearing their Loudoun County Sheriff's Office employee identification card.

V. EXEMPTIONS

- A. Family members of Loudoun County Sheriff's Office personnel, individuals sponsored by a deputy, and federal and sworn law enforcement officers from this state are exempt from limit set forth herein of one ride-along during a twelve-month period. Current applicants for employment with the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office or for the Auxiliary program, are also exempt from the one ride-along per twelve-month period restriction, however, such individuals may not ride-along more than once per month.
- B. Family members of Loudoun County Sheriff's Office personnel shall be exempt from a criminal history record check, NCR LInX check, license check, and local inquiry. Current applicants for any position with the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office shall be exempt from a criminal history record check, NCR LInX check, license check, and local inquiry only if these background checks have been previously performed by their respective background investigator.

VI. RULES AND REGULATIONS

- A. The shift supervisor will designate with whom the applicant will ride.
- B. The shift supervisor or deputy may terminate the ride-along at any time if, in their opinion, the continued participation presents an undue risk or the conduct of the ride-along participant is such that continued participation is not in the best interest of the Sheriff's Office. Should a participant ride-along be terminated in this manner, the deputy shall document the reason(s) for the termination in his/her IBR.
- C. The participant is prohibited from carrying, during any ride-along, any flashlight, camera, video recorder, any type of radio, tape recorder or player, binoculars, or any similar device, unless approved by the Ride-Along Program Coordinator. Mobile phones are permitted but may not be used or held during any law enforcement activity, and no recordings or photographs may be taken using a mobile phone.
- D. Ride along participants will not be permitted to carry weapons. This includes, but is not limited to firearms, knives, razor blades, needles, personal chemical protection devices, or restraining devices of any kind. Exceptions will be made for sworn, certified law enforcement officials from the Commonwealth of Virginia and federal government. The carrying of concealed weapons by sworn, certified law enforcement officials from the Commonwealth of Virginia and federal government will be in accordance with state code. The law enforcement officer will be identified by clearly displaying his/her badge of authority.
- E. Ride-along participants are prohibited from using any type of tobacco product during the ride-along.

- F. Participants are observers. They shall not exit a police vehicle during any law enforcement activity unless directed to do so by a deputy sheriff. They shall refrain from direct involvement in law enforcement functions or conversations with violators, suspects, arrestees, witnesses, complainants, or other members of the public encountered during the conduct of the official duties of the deputy sheriff with whom the participant is riding.
- G. A participant may be asked to temporarily interrupt his/her ride-along during hazardous or unusual circumstances. The participant will immediately comply with such requests and otherwise obey the directions of the deputy sheriff with whom the participant is riding.
- H. During a ride-along, the participant may be exposed to privileged information. The participant shall treat this information as confidential. The participant shall not disclose/repeat any information regarding individuals involved, statements made, or actions taken against someone involved in an incident. These items may only be discussed with other deputies if asked to disclose this information or testify in court proceedings. Under no circumstances shall the participant disclose any information about an incident to any representative of the media.
- I. Ride-along participants are a reflection on the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office and are expected to dress and act appropriately. The ride-along participant shall follow all instructions by the assigned deputy during the program. No interference with the performance of the deputy shall be permitted. Inappropriate actions or comments will not be tolerated and will result in the termination of the ride-along. Participants arriving under the influence of any alcoholic beverage or illegal substance will not participate in the program and will be subject to criminal prosecution. Attire is business casual. No shorts, t-shirts, tank tops, jeans or sandals are permitted. Men's shirts must have collars. Shoes are required. The participant should bring appropriate outerwear based on weather and temperature.

VI. REPORTS

- A. An IBR shall be completed by any deputy participating in the program. The report shall document any extraordinary circumstances (i.e., pursuits, injuries sustained by participant, participant removal, etc.). In the event of extraordinary circumstances, a copy of the incident report must be forwarded to the Ride-Along Program Coordinator for filing.