

<b>MESA POLICE</b>  Department Policy Manual	<b>Department Ride-Alongs</b>	<b>DPM 2.9.35</b> Effective 02/28/2018 Revised 11/29/2023
Approved by: <b>Chief of Police</b>	Chapter: Department Programs	Page: <b>1 of 6</b>

## 1. PURPOSE

This policy provides Mesa Police Department (MPD) members with guidelines regarding ride-alongs.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

**Direct Family Member:** For purposes of this policy, a direct family member is any of the following: spouse, committed partner, parent, child, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, niece, or nephew. Step-relationships of the same degree are included in this definition.

**Ride-Along:** A ride-along allows an individual, who is not an on-duty police officer, to ride in a Department vehicle with an officer or aircraft member to observe the Department's activities for various purposes.

**Ride-Along Individual (RAI):** For purposes of this policy, RAI will be utilized for ease of reference and refers to the individual authorized to ride-along with officers or aircraft members.

## 3. CITIZEN & DIRECT FAMILY MEMBER RIDE-ALONGS

### 3.1 Requirements

- A. Must be one of the following:
  1. A Citizen Police Academy participant.
  2. A Mesa Leadership Training and Development Program participant.
  3. Currently enrolled in an accredited law enforcement academic program or law enforcement academy.
  4. A member of the media.
  5. Anyone specifically approved by the Chief of Police or designee.
  6. Recruit candidates referred by the Hiring Unit.
  7. A direct family member.
- B. The RAI must be at least 18 years of age.
  1. Exception: Direct family members under the age of 18 are allowed to ride-along with approval of the individual's parent(s) and the Chief of Police/designee.
- C. The ride-along request must be approved through the chain of command up to the Division Commander or designee.

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1. Exception: For media ride-alongs, the request must be coordinated through the Media Relations Office (MRO) and approved by the Chief of Police or designee.

### 3.2 Process

- A. Refer RAI to Division where they wish to ride.
- B. RAI must complete [DPM 2.9.35F1 Mesa Police Ride-Along Request and Waiver of Liability](#) and present their photo ID.
- C. Division Coordinator or District ASA:
  1. Completes a records check, warrants check, and NCIC III inquiry for all RAIs. The Division Coordinator or designee may request the Criminal Justice Information Division (CJID) to conduct the background check if necessary.
  2. Checks the shared spreadsheet with other Divisions to verify the RAI has not completed a ride-along in the previous 6 months.
  3. Forwards information through the chain of command to the Division Commander or designee for review and approval.
    - a. If required, to the Chief of Police or designee as well.
  4. Upon approval by the chain of command, the Division Coordinator or designee will notify the RAI and schedule the RAI for the ride-along. The ride-along must be scheduled at least 48 hours in advance.

### 3.3 Limitations

- A. Ride-alongs are authorized for an entire shift if approved by the Shift Lieutenant.
- B. Ride-alongs will be scheduled during day or swing shift only.
  1. Direct family members may be authorized for graves if approved by the Division Commander.
- C. Only one ride-along is allowed per individual within a six-month period.
- D. No more than one ride-along will be assigned per shift at each Patrol Division unless authorized by the shift Lieutenant.
- E. Citizens will only ride with an officer of the same sex.
  1. This does not apply to direct family or professional staff members, who are authorized to ride with the opposite sex.
- F. Rides must not interfere with an officer's duties.
- G. RAIs are not allowed in any prisoner processing area or to be present for any post-arrest process with a suspect.
- H. Neat, conservative attire is required. Shoes must be closed toe.
- I. RAIs are not permitted to use any Department equipment.
- J. RAIs are not permitted to take photographs or video of sensitive information such as police scenes, suspects, or victims unless approved by the Chief of Police.

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- K. RAls must agree to keep information confidential that could potentially disrupt future operations or investigations.
- L. RAls are not permitted to carry a firearm unless they are currently AZPOST certified.
- M. RAls are subject to being subpoenaed as witnesses.

#### 4. PROFESSIONAL STAFF, VOLUNTEER & COM EMPLOYEE RIDE-ALONGS

##### 4.1 Process

- A. For ride-alongs conducted while on duty:
  - 1. Receive permission from:
    - a. For Professional Staff Members, their immediate supervisor.
    - b. For Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS), the VIPS Coordinator.
    - c. For COM employees outside of MPD, both their supervisor and the Chief of Police.
  - 2. Provide an appropriate reason for the ride-along (e.g., training, orientation, etc.).
  - 3. If approved, the supervisor or VIPS Coordinator schedules the ride-along through the Division Commander or designee.
- B. For ride-alongs conducted while off duty:
  - 1. Obtain permission from the Division Commander or designee.
  - 2. Complete [DPM 2.9.35F1 Mesa Police Ride-Along Request and Waiver of Liability](#) and turn in to their supervisor.
    - a. Supervisor coordinates with Division Commander to schedule ride-along.

##### 4.2 Limitations

- A. Must have completed probationary period.
  - 1. Exception: One-Team trainings provide one ride-along as part of the program. Participants in One-Team training who have not completed their probationary period are exempt from this requirement.
- B. Ride-along must be completed with minimal disruption to schedules of all concerned.
- C. Ride-alongs will be scheduled day or swing shift only.
  - 1. The Division Commander may authorize a graveyard shift ride-along based on special circumstances (i.e., personnel requesting a ride-along with an assigned mentor).
- D. Rides are limited to ½ of the shift.
- E. The use of overtime is not authorized for a ride-along.
- F. Professional staff members and VIPS are limited to one ride-along in a 6-month period.

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- G. Only those with a Terminal Operator Certificate (TOC) are allowed to use the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT).
- H. RAls are prohibited from carrying a firearm unless they are currently AZPOST certified.

## 5. AIRCRAFT RIDE-ALONGS

### 5.1 Requirements

- A. Only authorized for law enforcement or City-related business.
  - 1. Sworn officers from other jurisdictions and spouses of Air Support Unit members may ride-along if approved by the Aviation Administrator.
  - 2. Must be at least 18 years of age.
- B. Requires approval by the Chief of Police or designee.

### 5.2 Process

- A. Individual requests the ride-along from Air Support Unit using [DPM 2.10.20F1 Air Support Unit Special Request](#).
- B. Background checks will not be performed on:
  - 1. MPD members with Level 5 clearance.
  - 2. Sworn members of another police department with active credentials.
- C. If a background check is required, the Division Coordinator is responsible for ensuring the check is completed.
- D. The request is forwarded up the chain of command to the Division Commander or designee.
- E. Chief of Police or designee gives final approval for the ride-along.
- F. After approval of the ride-along, complete [DPM 2.10.20F2 Aviation Ride-Along Waiver of Liability](#).
- G. When possible, call Air Support Unit 48 hours in advance to schedule.
- H. Pilot in command retains the authority to refuse any ride-along.

### 5.3 Limitations

- A. Only sworn members may carry a firearm.
  - 1. This includes both sworn members from MPD and other jurisdictions.
- B. Neat, conservative attire is required.
  - 1. No dangling earrings.
  - 2. Long hair must be tied back.
- C. Rider may be subjected to subpoena as a witness.
- D. No aerosol containers allowed (e.g., chemical weapons, etc.)
- E. No more than two RAls per flight.
- F. Cameras and video recorders must be secured to the rider.
- G. Only one ride-along per individual in a 6-month period allowed.

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H. Flight length is at the discretion of the Aviation Administrator.

## 6. CADET RIDE-ALONGS

See [CDT 3.4 Cadet Ride-Alongs](#).

## 7. RESPONSIBILITIES & SAFETY CONCERNS

### 7.1 Officer Responsibilities

- A. Maintain a professional demeanor at all times.
- B. Take the RAI only where duty directs.
- C. Officers are responsible for protecting the security of the RAI during the shift. They must keep the RAI under their supervision at all times, except in situations involving safety concerns. See **Section 7.4 Safety Concerns** below.
- D. Immediately report to a supervisor any failure of the RAI to comply with officer's instructions, violations of policy, or interference with duties.
- E. Officers and supervisors have authority to terminate ride-alongs at any time, at their discretion.

### 7.2 Flight Crew Responsibilities (for Aircraft Ride-Alongs)

- A. Ensure [DPM 2.10.20F2 Aviation Ride-Along Waiver of Liability](#) is completed.
- B. Report any failure of the RAI to comply with instructions to an Air Support Unit supervisor as soon as possible.
- C. Any member of the Air Support Unit may terminate ride-alongs at any time.

### 7.3 RAI Responsibilities

- A. Obey all orders and instructions of the officer at all times.
- B. Do not participate in any actions or activities that would endanger the officer, disrupt or compromise an investigation, be considered criminal activity, or endanger the welfare of the public.
- C. Do not take any photographs or record any videos of sensitive information or police scenes, suspects, or victims without permission of the Chief of Police or designee.
- D. When directed, RAIs are prohibited from passing along any information gained during the course of the ride-along to others that is not strictly need-to-know.

### 7.4 Safety Concerns

- A. If any situation arises which may endanger the RAI or hinder an investigation by their presence, the officer may:

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1. Direct the RAI to remain in the police vehicle or flee to safety.
2. Drop the RAI off at a safe location, when practical to do so, or give instructions to keep the RAI safe.
- B. If advance notice is provided, the RAI should be removed from potentially dangerous situations and dropped off at a safe public location where there is access to a telephone.
  1. The officer should notify their supervisor of the time and location the RAI was dropped off when safe to do so.
  2. The supervisor will arrange for a second officer to pick up the RAI and inform them when the officer is enroute.

## 8. RECORDS

- A. Supervisors/VIP Coordinator will document ride-alongs in the professional staff member/VIPS' workstation file for member ride-alongs.
- B. Each [DPM 2.9.35F1 Mesa Police Ride-Along Request and Waiver of Liability](#) will be:
  1. Filed and maintained at the Patrol Division where the ride-along occurred.
  2. Retained for a period of two years and then purged.
- C. Each [DPM 2.10.20F2 Aviation Ride-Along Waiver of Liability](#) will be:
  1. Maintained by the Air Support Unit.
  2. Retained for a period of two years and then purged.

## REFERENCES

- [CDT 3.4 Cadet Ride-Alongs](#)
- [DPM 2.9.35F1 Mesa Police Ride-Along Request and Waiver of Liability](#)
- [DPM 2.10.20F1 Air Support Unit Special Request](#)
- [DPM 2.10.20F2 Aviation Ride-Along Waiver of Liability](#)