

Ride-Along Policy

405.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Ride-Along Program provides an opportunity for community members to experience the law enforcement function first hand. This policy provides the requirements, approval process, and hours of operation for the Ride-Along Program.

405.1.1 ELIGIBILITY

The Santa Monica Police Department Ride-Along Program is offered to community academy participants, police officer applicants, police explorers, those employed within the City, and those authorized by the Chief of Police. Every attempt will be made to accommodate interested persons however any applicant may be disqualified without cause.

The following factors may be considered in disqualifying an applicant and are not limited to:

- Being under 15 years of age
- Prior criminal history
- Pending criminal action
- Pending lawsuit against the Department
- Denial by any supervisor

405.1.2 AVAILABILITY

The Ride-Along Program is available on most days of the week, with certain exceptions. Exceptions to this schedule may be made as approved by the Chief of Police, Division Commander, or Watch Commander.

405.2 PROCEDURE TO REQUEST A RIDE-ALONG

Generally, ride-along requests will be scheduled by the Community Affairs Unit in coordination with the Watch Commander. The participant will complete a Ride-Along waiver Form and Ride-Along Program Form. Information requested will include a valid ID or California driver's license, address, and telephone number. If the participant is under 18 years of age, a parent/guardian must be present to complete the Ride-Along Form.

The Community Affairs Unit will schedule a date, based on availability, at least one week after the date of application. If approved, a copy will be forwarded to the respective Watch Commander as soon as possible for his/her scheduling considerations.

If the ride-along is denied after the request has been made, a representative of the Department will contact the applicant and advise him/her of the denial.

Santa Monica Police Department

Santa Monica Police Department Policy Manual

Ride-Along Policy

405.2.1 PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Once approved, civilian ride-alongs will be allowed to ride no more than once every twelve months. An exception would apply to the following: Cadets, Explorers, Chaplains, police applicants, and all others with approval of the Watch Commander.

An effort will be made to ensure that no more than one community member participates in a ride-along during any given shift. No more than one ride-along participant will be allowed in the officer's vehicle.

Ride-along requirements for police cadets are covered in the Police Cadets Policy.

405.2.2 SUITABLE ATTIRE

Any person approved for a ride-along is required to be suitably dressed in casual business attire consisting of a collared shirt or blouse (at least 1/4 sleeve long); jacket, slacks, and flat, close-toed shoes. Sandals, high heels, tennis shoes, T-shirts, tank tops, shorts, mini-skirts and ripped or torn blue jeans are not permitted. Hats and ball caps will not be worn in the police vehicle. The Watch Commander or field supervisor may refuse a ride-along to anyone not properly dressed or who does not otherwise present an appropriate, professional appearance.

405.2.3 POLICE APPLICANT RIDE ALONGS

Ride-along requests by police applicants will be scheduled by the Professional Standards Section in coordination with the Field Training Officer Program. The Professional Standards Section will schedule a date, based on FTO availability, and if approved, the Watch Commander will be notified as soon as possible for his/her scheduling considerations.

Upon completion of the ride-along, the FTO, as soon as practicable, will make contact with the Background Investigator (if one has been assigned to the applicant) or the Training Sergeant. The Ride-Along Waiver and Ride-Along Program Form shall be turned into the Training Sergeant.

405.2.4 PEACE OFFICER RIDE-ALONGS

Off-duty members of this Department or any other law enforcement agency will not be permitted to ride-along with on-duty officers without the expressed consent of the Watch Commander. In the event that such a ride-along is permitted, the off-duty employee shall not be considered on-duty and shall not represent themselves as a peace officer or participate in any law enforcement activity except as emergency circumstances may require.

405.2.5 EXPLORER RIDE-ALONG

Explorers who have graduated from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Explorer Academy are restricted to one (1) ride-along every three (3) months. An explorer shall be accommodated as a walk-in. Prior approval must be obtained by the Community Affairs Supervisor. Additional regulations to be followed:

- (a) All explorer ride-alongs shall be cleared through the Explorer Advisor prior to obtaining approval by the Community Affairs Supervisor.
- (b) A written consent shall be obtained from the Explorer Advisor.

Santa Monica Police Department

Santa Monica Police Department Policy Manual

Ride-Along Policy

- (c) Host officer approval shall be required prior to each ride-along.
- (d) A Ride-Along Waiver and Ride-Along Program Form shall be completed.
- (e) At no time shall an explorer ride-along conflict or interfere with a community member ride-along
- (f) Explorers are not allowed to ride-along while in uniform; they are to wear civilian attire.
- (g) Explorers, as citizen observers, must restrict their activities to those of an observer. They are not authorized in any way to become involved in police activity (unless it is an emergent circumstance).

405.2.6 RIDE-ALONG CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECK

All ride-along applicants are subject to a criminal history check. The criminal history check may include a local records check and a Department of Justice Automated Criminal History System check through CLETS prior to their approval as a ride-along with a law enforcement officer (provided that the ride-along is not an employee of the Santa Monica Police Department) (CLETS Policies, Practices and Procedures Manual § 1.6.1.F.2.).

405.3 OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITY

The officer shall advise the dispatcher that a ride-along is present in the vehicle before going into service. Officers shall consider the safety of the ride-along at all times. Officers should use sound discretion when encountering a potentially dangerous situation, and continuously consider the safety of the ride-along. At the discretion of the officer, the ride-along may be continued or terminated at any time.

Upon completion of the ride-along, the Ride-Along Waiver Form and Ride-Along Program Form shall be returned to the Watch Commander for filing.

405.4 CONTROL OF RIDE-ALONG

The assigned employee shall maintain control over the ride-along at all times and instruct him/her in the conditions that necessarily limit their participation. These instructions should include:

- (a) The ride-along will follow the directions of the officer.
- (b) The ride-along will not become involved in any investigation, handling of evidence, discussions with victims or suspects, or handling any police equipment.
- (c) The ride-along may terminate the ride at any time and the officer may return the observer to their home or to the station if the ride-along interferes with the performance of the officer's duties.
- (d) Ride-alongs may be allowed to continue riding during the transportation and booking process provided this does not jeopardize their safety.

Santa Monica Police Department

Santa Monica Police Department Policy Manual

Ride-Along Policy

- (e) Officers will not allow any ride-alongs to be present in any residences or situations that would jeopardize their safety or cause undue stress or embarrassment to a victim or any other citizen.
- (f) Under no circumstance shall a civilian ride-along be permitted to enter a private residence with a sworn officer without the expressed consent of the resident or other authorized person.
- (g) Ride-alongs are not permitted to view any JDIC/CLETS information displayed on the MDC screen.
- (h) During the course of a police investigation, Public Safety Dispatchers may broadcast information found in the CLETS/JDIC system; hence, when feasible, officers should turn down their radio during such broadcasts.
- (i) While at the scene of a traffic collision, hospital, or other medical type of emergency that necessitates a patient's health information be shared with medical personnel, officers shall ensure the Ride-Along is out of earshot in order to protect the patient's HIPPA rights.