



Seattle Police Department Policy Manual



16.030 – Ride-Along Program

Original Effective Date: 02/01/2021

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The Ride-Along Program allows an observer to accompany a sworn employee during an assigned shift. The Seattle Police Department sees value in allowing a firsthand observation of some daily police operations and looks to provide a safe and informative experience.

16.030-POL

1. Observers Must Meet Eligibility Requirements

Generally, only people 18 years of age and older may participate in the Ride-Along Program.

People 16-17 years of age may participate if the following conditions are met:

- Written permission from the juvenile's parent/guardian with the reason for the request, such as being related to the explorer program or a school project.
- The precinct captain or unit commander must contact the juvenile's parent/guardian and explain that the ride-along may expose the juvenile to scenes of violence, obscene language, nudity, and other adult situations.
 - Even if both requirements are met, the precinct captain or unit commander has the discretion to deny any ride-along request.

A person is only allowed one ride-along per year unless the person is participating as part of the SPD hiring process under the direction of the Background Unit.

People requesting to ride-along must agree to a criminal history inquiry and warrant check.

2. There are Disqualifiers to Participation as an Observer

A criminal history that includes violent crimes or crimes against government order will automatically disqualify a person from being a ride-along observer.

If the requestor has other criminal history, the watch or unit lieutenant decides, on a case-by-case basis, whether the person will be allowed to participate.

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- If the request is approved, the watch or unit lieutenant will inform the assigned sworn employee of the observer's criminal history before the ride-along takes place. The sworn employee may refuse to take the observer based on this information.

3. Precincts and Units Retain Ride-Along Requests

Each precinct and section will retain ride-along requests for the current year plus three (3) years.

With these requests, the precincts and sections will maintain a list of individuals who have been disqualified or restricted from participating in ride-alongs.

4. Requestors Submit Ride-Along Requests and Waivers to Affected Precincts and Units

A person requesting a ride-along submits the request to the precinct or section captain where the ride-along will take place.

Requests will include the [Ride-Along Request and Waiver](#) (Form 7.11).

The precinct or section captain may issue a conditional approval allowing the request to proceed through the screening process.

5. Staff Schedules Ride-Alongs After Conditional Approval

After a request is conditionally approved, the precinct or section captain will have staff contact the requestor and schedule a date and time for the ride-along.

- If staff are unable to contact the requestor after three (3) documented attempts, they will notify the captain for final disposition of the request. The requestor must reinitiate the ride-along process.

The precinct or section captain will delegate scheduled ride-along requests to a watch commander or unit lieutenant to facilitate.

6. Observers Sign Waivers and Undergo Criminal History and Warrant Checks on the Day of the Ride-Along

On the day of the ride-along, the assigned sergeant will run a warrant check and an NCIC III criminal history check on the observer.

Purpose code J is for applicants with "applicant ride along" in the ATTN field. Purpose code C is for all others with "ride along" for the ATTN field.

The sergeant will print the completed request/waiver form for the observer to sign before the ride-along begins.

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7. The Department Maintains Discretion to Cancel, Reschedule or Terminate Ride-Alongs

On the date of a scheduled ride-along, the watch or unit lieutenant will decide to allow the ride-along or reschedule based on staffing levels or any unforeseen circumstances.

During the ride-along, if the observer behaves in a manner that is inappropriate or endangers any person's safety, the assigned officer may terminate the ride-along. If this occurs, the officer will inform their chain of command.

- The precinct or section captain decides whether the observer should be denied future ride-along requests.

8. The Department Sets Guidelines for Observer Conduct and Activities

Observers will not ride along if they have outstanding warrants.

Observers will not ride along if they appear impaired by drugs or alcohol.

Observers will not ride with a sworn employee with whom they have a significant relationship such as a spouse, domestic partner, or other close relative.

Observers will not wear any part of a police uniform or any inappropriate clothing or accessory.

Observers will not carry firearms or any other weapons.

Observers will not attend roll call.

Observers will not accompany department personnel serving a search warrant.

9. Sworn Employees Have Additional Responsibilities When Assigned an Observer

Sworn employees will not engage in vehicle pursuits or emergency driving while an observer is in the vehicle.

If there is a known emergency, where it is reasonable to assume that the ride-along observer will be in danger, the sworn employee will attempt to drop the observer off in a safe place before responding. The sworn employee will inform Communications so that the observer may be picked up as soon as possible once the emergency is under control and resources allow.

If the sworn employee is unable to drop the observer off at a safe location, the sworn employee will not respond to the emergency.

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If an incident occurred during the ride-along where the observer may be asked to be a witness, the sworn employee will inform the sergeant and fully document the circumstances in any relevant paperwork.

10. Assigned Sworn Employees Document Concerns About Observer Behavior

The assigned sworn employee will notify their supervisor of any concerns they may have about the ride-along. The precinct or section captain will ensure these concerns are noted with the archived request for future reference.

16.030-PRO-1 The Ride-Along Process

Requestor

1. **Submits** a ride-along request including Ride-Along Request and Waiver (Form 7.11).

Precinct or Section Captain

2. **Receives** the request.
3. **Contacts** the parent/guardian of any requestors under 18 years of age to explain that the ride-along may expose the juvenile to scenes of violence, obscene language, nudity, and other adult situations.
4. **Assigns** the request to staff for scheduling if the request is approved to proceed for further screening, or
Notes the disposition in the file and **notifies** the requestor if the request is denied.

Precinct or Unit Staff

5. **Creates** a file or folder to archive the request.
6. **Contacts** the requestor to arrange a date and time for the ride-along.
7. **Documents** each scheduling attempt on the request form.
8. **Forwards** the request to the watch or unit lieutenant with the scheduled ride-along information, or
Documents and **notifies** the captain if unable to contact the requestor after three (3) attempts.

Watch or Unit Lieutenant

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9. **Forwards** the request to the assigned sergeant.

Sergeant

10. **Performs** a warrant and criminal history check on the day of the ride-along.
11. **Assigns** the ride-along to a sworn employee if checks are clear, or **Confers** with the lieutenant on canceling the ride-along if warrants or disqualifying criminal history are found.
12. **Prints** the completed request/waiver for the observer to sign.

Sworn Employee

13. **Meets** with the ride-along observer, and ensures the observer understands conduct requirements and activity restrictions of participation in the ride-along program.
14. **Notifies** a supervisor if there are any issues during the ride-along.

Sergeant

15. **Sends** scanned or paper copy of the completed and signed request/waiver to the captain via chain of command after the ride-along is completed.

Precinct or Unit Staff

16. **Archives** the completed and signed request-along with any relevant documentation.