



Division 13 **Public Affairs**

Chapter 05 – Ride-Along Observer Program

January 2009

POLICY

A uniform procedure will be followed by persons wishing to be ride-along observers with operational units of the Prince George's County Fire/Emergency Medical Services Department. Adherence to this policy will ensure the safety of all personnel and the public, and is the shared responsibility of the Incident Commander, the unit officer-in-charge, and the participant.

DEFINITIONS

Observers – persons who are not members of the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department; this definition specifically includes members of other fire/rescue departments outside of Prince George's County.

Minimum staffing – three persons (engine company) or four persons (truck/squad) certified to engage in structural firefighting; two persons (ambulance) certified at the appropriate level for basic ambulance medical care.

PROCEDURES

Observers shall be at least 18 years of age. This shall be confirmed with a review of a driver's license and or picture identification card.

Observers shall sign the release form prior to riding any Fire/EMS Department vehicle. Signature shall be witnessed by the appropriate Battalion Chief or highest ranking Volunteer Chief officer. No one may sign for the chief officers.

Observers shall review the rules governing this procedure, which will be acknowledged on the release form.

The Advanced Emergency Medical Services (AEMS) office has specific procedures for allied medical professionals and students to participate/observe on Medic Units. Please refer to General Order 14-09.

The Ride-Along Program is designed to benefit the Department with various avenues of recognition and information exchange. The additional benefit is the ability to recruit personnel. The program is not designed for participants to bypass the application process and background review.

Ride-Along participation will be limited to 72-hour blocks.

Observers will be limited to four (4) opportunities per calendar year. Participants who exceed this limit will be required to apply for membership and their privileges revoked until the process is completed.

Requests for special exemptions must be submitted in writing to the Lieutenant Colonel of Emergency Operations for approval. The applicant's participation beyond the parameters that are set is prohibited until approval is received in writing.

Stations that violate this procedure will not be permitted to participate in this program for a period of time specified by the Lieutenant Colonel of Emergency Operations.



Observers shall not engage in actual firefighting or rescue operations, and will not count toward minimum staffing.

No more than two (2) observers per station may participate in the Ride-Along Observer Program. In addition, no more than one observer may ride on a single piece of apparatus at a time.

Observers shall remain seated and belted when riding fire and rescue apparatus and follow all applicable safety rules.

Observers shall remain outside the perimeter of the operational area of the scene. Observers shall stay outside of and away from the building on fire calls and shall remain a safe distance away from accident vehicles on rescue calls.

Under no circumstances will an observer be permitted to enter an IDLH atmosphere or a building that is on fire until such time as the incident has been placed under control by the Incident Commander, the IDLH atmosphere has been cleared, the building or area has been determined to be safe for entry by non-operational personnel, and specific approval is granted by the Incident Commander. The assigned unit officer, division supervisor or designated command officer will escort and supervise the observer.

Observers shall wear an orange fire helmet and/or a safety vest clearly marked "OBSERVER." The helmet and/or vest shall be worn at all times while on the emergency scene, and no other structural firefighting equipment is to be worn.

Observers shall wear clothing that is comfortable and does not bring discredit to the Fire/EMS Department.

Observers shall remain under the control of the officer-in-charge. Failure to follow the directions of the officer-in-charge will result in the removal of the privilege to participate as an observer. The officer-in-charge must document cases where the observer failed to follow direction and their privilege was revoked. This documentation will be forwarded to the Emergency Operations Command (EOC) office, where a list will be maintained of those persons not eligible to participate. The Duty Chief will refer to this list when notification is made about a ride-along.

The officer-in-charge shall ensure that the Observer complies with all of his/her responsibilities and rules specific to the Ride-Along Observer Program.

The Battalion Chief/Volunteer Division Chief/Volunteer Major shall witness the Observer's signature on the release form prior to the Observer riding any Fire/EMS Department vehicle and make notification to the Battalion Chief, if not the approving signature. The Battalion Chief will make immediate notification to the Duty Chief. A copy of the completed waiver and a copy of the Observer's driver's license/ID shall be faxed to the Emergency Operations Command office for recordkeeping purposes.

REFERENCES

N/A

FORMS/ATTACHMENTS

Ride-Along Observer Program Release Form



RIDE-ALONG OBSERVER PROGRAM RELEASE

In consideration of my receiving permission from the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department to enter upon the premises of any fire station or related entity, any other premises owned and/or operated and/or used by any fire station within Prince George's County, and in further consideration of receiving permission from said Fire/EMS Department to participate in a Ride-Along Observer Program, wherein I will be riding in, on, or upon Fire/EMS Department vehicles or using other apparatus, the undersigned hereby releases the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department, Prince George's County Police Department, and any and all agents, officers, servants, employees, attorneys, or other representatives of the foregoing from any and all liability, claims, demands, actions and causes of actions, whatsoever, arising out of or related to any loss, property damage, physical injury, contagious disease, or death that may be sustained by me while in, on, or upon any premises, vehicles, or apparatus owned, occupied, or used by the foregoing, or which may be sustained by me while at the scene of any real or apparent emergency situation requiring a response of the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department, or while commuting to and from the fire station(s) and other points.

I hereby certify that I am duly aware of the risks and hazards, including serious physical injury or death, inherent upon participating in the Ride-Along Observer Program, that such risks and hazards may exist even in non-emergency situations, and being duly aware of such risks and hazards, I hereby elect, voluntarily, to participate in the Ride-Along Observer Program. I hereby assume all risks of loss, damage, and/or injury, including death that may be sustained by me or by any of my property while participating in the Ride-Along Observer Program.

This release shall be binding upon my relatives, spouse, heirs, distributees, next of kin, executors, administrators, and any other interested parties.

In signing this release, I hereby acknowledge and represent:

1. I have read the rules and regulations outlined in General Order 1-3, Ride-Along Observer Program.
2. I have read the release, understand it, and signed it voluntarily.
3. I am over eighteen (18) years of age and I am of sound mind and of sound physical health.
4. I am not an agent, servant, or other employee of the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department.
5. Any injuries or other damage suffered by me will not be compensable by Worker's Compensation or any other insurance program maintained by the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department.



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I also agree to adhere to the following guidelines:

1. I will abide by any and all applicable rules and regulations of the Fire/EMS Department.
2. I will not ride or attempt to ride or use or attempt to use, any vehicle or apparatus utilized within the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department until such time as a duly authorized officer has reviewed with me the procedures for riding or using same.
3. I also agree that I have no physical or mental handicaps that may affect me during my participation in this program or which may be aggravated by my participation in this program, except for the following:

Despite the Fire/EMS Department's knowledge of this disability or defect, I agree that their continuing grant of permission for me to participate in this program shall not subject them to any liability.

4. I also authorize and instruct the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department or their authorized representatives to notify the following person in case of any accident in which I am involved while participating in this program or while I am commuting to and from the fire station(s) or other points.

Name & Relationship

Address

Telephone Number(s)



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5. Have you been denied membership or career status in the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department for criminal record, background investigation, or medical reasons? Yes ____ No ____

If so, explain _____

6. Do you have any pending criminal charges against you? Yes ____ No ____

If so, explain _____

7. Do you have any Felony convictions? Yes ____ No ____

If so, explain _____

8. If you have been denied membership in another fire/rescue organization outside of Prince George's County, said reason(s) is to be disclosed to the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department.

9. Should I be a bona fide member of a fire/rescue association or department, I will disclose the name of such organization:

Name of Organization

Address

Telephone Number

President/Chief Officer



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- 10. Upon request, a medical waiver statement from a physician shall be submitted to substantiate fitness to perform in a ride-along observer status on-the-scene of emergency operations.

This release form shall become a permanent record of the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department.

Expected "Ride-Along Observer" dates and station:

_____ to _____ **Station** _____

At the end of this period, a new release form shall be obtained.

Signature

Printed Name of Participant

Address

Home Telephone

Work Telephone

Date of Birth

Approved and Witnessed by (Choose one):

Volunteer Chief Name (*Please Print*)

Signature/Date

Departmental Duty Officer Name (*Please Print*)

Signature/Date

Duty Chief Notified by: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Received By EOC:

Signature

Date