




WINCHESTER POLICE DEPARTMENT OPERATION ORDER

NOTE: This policy is for internal use only, and does not enlarge an employee’s civil liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or case in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violation of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this Department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

Number 2-33		Effective Date August 14, 2020	Review Date August 12, 2020	Reviewing Division Administration
Subject CITIZEN RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM	<input type="checkbox"/> New Policy <input type="checkbox"/> Amends <input type="checkbox"/> Replaces: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Revised April 13, 2021	This policy shall apply to personnel assigned to the following divisions: <input type="checkbox"/> All Personnel <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patrol Division <input type="checkbox"/> Administration Division <input type="checkbox"/> Investigation Division		
Referencies VLEPSC CALEA				
 _____ Chief of Police or Designee		_____ March 23, 2023 Date		

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures for the Citizen Ride-Along program.

II. POLICY

The Citizen Ride-Along program allows citizens to voluntarily accompany officers and observe law enforcement activities to better understand policing. The observer may request to ride in any area, at any time, or with a particular officer. If convenient to the Department and conditions permit, permission may be granted. The Department's community oriented policing goals include a commitment to work with the community to solve neighborhood problems and to operate an open, accessible, and accountable Department. The Citizen Ride-Along program is consistent with these goals. Safety of law enforcement personnel shall be a primary concern when approving ride-along requests.

III. PROCEDURES

A. Ride-Along Request

1. Ride-along forms are available from the Department’s Administration Division. A ride-along form must be properly completed prior to the ride-along beginning.
2. The Captain of the Patrol Division or his/her designee shall grant permission for citizens to ride with officers. A records check may be performed on any ride-along applicant.

B. Limitations

1. A person shall not ride with an officer unless a ride-along agreement including a waiver has been properly completed and approval has been granted by the Captain of the Patrol Division or his/her designee. Ride-along approval shall be granted for one specific shift, or any portion thereof, unless special limitations or extensions are granted by the Captain of the Patrol Division or his/her designee.
2. A spouse or family member may accompany an officer during their tour of duty with approval from the Deputy Chief of Police.
3. Normally, no more than one (1) observer shall accompany an officer at a time.
4. The minimum age for ride-along participants is eighteen (18) years of age,
5. No citizen shall be allowed to observe law enforcement activities relating to raids or ride with plain clothes officers without specific, advance coordination and approval of the Chief of Police or his/her designee.
6. A citizen may only participate in the Ride-Along program twice during a calendar year. City council members, other approved City officials, and immediate family members of officers are exempt from this provision.

C. Beginning the Ride-Along

1. If no specific officer is requested by the observer, the on-duty supervisor shall appoint the host officer.
2. Before the ride along, the on-duty supervisor shall provide an observer with an observer comment form and ask that the form be completed and returned at the end of the ride-along. The host officer will be provided with a ride-along report and shall complete and return the form to the on-duty supervisor at the end of the ride-along.
3. The observer should be appropriately dressed in either business attire or casual wear. If the observer's manner of dress is not appropriate, ride-along approval may be cancelled by the on-duty supervisor. Observer will be required to wear a department issued observer identification name tag at all times during the tour.
4. The host officer shall verbally go over the form with the applicant and instruct the observer on the following procedures:
 - a. Follow the officer's directions;
 - b. Appearance in court as a witness may be necessary;

- c. The observer may end the ride when he or she wishes;
- d. The officer may end the ride if safety circumstances dictate;
- e. The observer must wear a seat belt and shoulder strap when riding in the Department vehicle;
- f. Observers shall identify themselves, if asked, as an authorized citizen observer;
- g. Observers shall not smoke or use other tobacco products during the ride-along; and
- h. Observers shall not be permitted to carry a flashlight, camera, radio of any type, or binoculars, unless authorized by the Chief of Police.
- i. Observers shall not carry weapons or restraining devices of any kind. Exceptions may be granted to law enforcement personnel; and
- j. Observers are prohibited from video and audio recording the ride-along unless authorized by the Chief of Police.

D. Observer Conduct

- 1. Observers shall at all times remain under the complete control of the host officer and shall comply with all directions and requests.
- 2. Observers shall not interfere with investigations in any way by conversing with victims, suspects, or witnesses. Handling evidence, equipment, or participating in any enforcement activity is prohibited by the observer unless directed to do so by the host officer per Virginia Code 18.2-463 (refusal to aid an officer in the execution of his office).

E. Arrests and Transporting Prisoners

- 1. If the host officer determines that there are no hazards involved, the observer may accompany the officer while either transporting or processing prisoners. If the officer believes a problem may arise, the observer should either be temporarily transferred to another officer or returned to the Department.
- 2. Observers shall not be permitted to remain with prisoners in the absence of officers.

F. Emergency Situations

- 1. At no time shall an officer, while accompanied by an observer, engage in pursuit driving. Emergency response driving is permitted with an observer. However, the officer must use good judgment with regard to the observer's safety and well-being.

2. In the event of an emergency situation in which the observer should not be in the vehicle, the host officer may choose to do the following:
 - a. Place the observer at an occupied fire and rescue station;
 - b. Place the observer at an open convenience store or business;
 - c. Leave the observer in the Department vehicle away from the scene and in a safe area;
 - d. Leave the observer at a known residence; or
 - e. Leave the observer at any other safe location.

G. Ending the Ride-Along

Upon completion of the ride-along, the host officer will return the observer to the Department and thank the observer for his or her interest. The host officer will ask the observer to complete the observer's comment form. Completed observer forms shall be forwarded to the Captain of the Patrol Division for review and record storage.