

WILMINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICIES & PROCEDURES

SUBJECT: RIDE ALONG POLICY

EFFECTIVE DATE: 01-01-2012

REVIEW DATE: 07-02-19
06-26-18

SUPERSEDES: 04-24-2012

APPROVED: Matthew Murano
Chief of Police

NOTE: This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. The policy should not be construed as creating a higher duty of care, in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party civil claims against employees. A violation of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department for non-judicial administrative action in accordance with the laws governing employee discipline.

- I. **Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to set forth the department's mandates with respect to citizen ride-alongs.
- II. **Policy:** In an effort to enhance the mutual respect of police officers and the community we serve, this department hereby establishes a ride-along program. This program will provide its participants with a greater understanding of law enforcement in our City or Town. At the same time, through interaction between our officers and members of the community, lines of open communication will be established.
- III. **Procedures:**
 - A. **Who can participate in the ride-along program:**
 - a. All participants must be at least 16 years of age and must have signed the Police Department waiver form.
 - b. Community members who are interested in broadening their knowledge of the police function within the City or Town. This would include members of civic organizations, college students who are interested in the law enforcement field, (citizens' police academy participants, if implemented), and any other person authorized by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.
 - c. Media representatives who wish to conduct a ride along for purposes of developing a news story or other documentary. This category includes the print and electronic media. Media representatives must complete all documents required of any other participant. In addition, members of the media must have express written authorization from the office of the Chief of Police before recording, by any means (audio, video, film, photo), any portion of the ride-along.
 - B. **Application Process:**
 - a. Applications for ride-alongs shall be available at police headquarters. Applicants must provide a photo-identification for verification when they return their completed application.
 - b. Completed applications shall be forwarded to the Chief of Police or his designee.
 - c. Application Review will include a local check within the department's record management system. . An applicant who has a felony record or a misdemeanor record that involves moral turpitude or dishonesty may be excluded from participation in this program.

- d. Once approved, the applicant shall be notified (phone or mail option) and assigned a date for the ride-along.
- e. Participants shall only be allowed to participate in this program once every 12 months unless given written authorization from the Chief of Police.
- f. Ride-along guests will not be allowed to ride during the scheduled tour of duty of an officer who is related to the guest.

C. Reporting for Ride-along:

- a. The ride-along program shall be scheduled between the hours of (optional restrictions) 1600-2230 hours, unless otherwise approved by the Chief of Police or his designee.
- b. Participants should report to the police headquarters 15 minutes prior to their scheduled participation.
- c. If available a supervising officer shall meet with the ride-along participant. The ride along participant and the supervising officer shall review and sign the liability waiver form. The supervising officer must sign as a witness. Any participant who decides not to sign the liability waiver form shall not be allowed to participate in the program. Where no supervisor is available, the host officer shall go over and witness the signature on the waiver.
- d. When available a supervising officer shall review the rules of the ride-along program with the participant. In this review, the participant should be reminded that they may be called as a witness in court, if they observe a police event which becomes subject to court action.
- e. The supervising officer shall issue the participant a "ride-along" participant identification tag that the participant shall be required to wear on his or her outermost clothing.

D. Duties of the Participant:

- a. Participants shall play no active role in the police function. They must only act as an observer unless otherwise directed by their host-officer.
- b. Participants shall not be allowed to operate any police equipment unless directed to do so by a police officer in an extreme emergency
- c. Participants must remain in the police vehicle at all times until directed otherwise by the host officer.
- d. Participants must not speak to victims, witnesses, prisoners or other persons associated with a police event. Should a witness, prisoner, victim or other person speak to the participant, the participant should politely direct the person to speak to one of the officers present.
- e. Participants shall not bring cameras or any recording devices without the express written permission of the Chief of Police or his designee. Participants cellphones will be turned off at the start of the ride-along.
- f. Participants shall not enter any person's home while participating in the ride-along.
- g. Participants shall follow the instructions of the host-officer at all times during the ride-along.
- h. Participants shall not be allowed to carry any firearm or other weapon, even when otherwise authorized by law, while participating in the ride-along program.
- i. Participants should be dressed in comfortable, casual but conservative clothing during the ride-along. (Pants and shirt/jacket for men, Pants and blouse/jacket for women) Participants who are inappropriately dressed, as determined by the supervising officer, shall not be allowed to participate in the program on the assigned date.

E. Duties of Host Officer:

- a. Officer's primary obligation to participant and may limit officer's activities and/or responses.

- b.** Host officers shall conduct their activities in a manner consistent with the efficiency of the police department as if the rider was not present.
- c.** Officers have a primary obligation to the welfare and safety of the ride along participant. Officers shall not respond to code two and three calls until initial responding officers have determined the scene to be safe.
- d.** Distinguish, civilian from news media, allowing the media to assume the risk of more dangerous activities.
- e.** The host officer has complete discretion to determine the level of dangerousness to the ride-along participant.
- f.** Ride-along waiver should spell out the inherent dangerousness of this program and should not in any way indicate that the host officer will provide any protection to the participant.
- g.** Host Officers, in their discretion may drop a participant off in an area of safety while responding to a dangerous police event in order to avoid exposing the participant to danger.
- h.** Host officers may allow the participant to leave the police vehicle in order to better observe the police activity; however, where a participant has been allowed to leave the police vehicle, host officers shall maintain close supervision of the participant and not allow the participant to involve him or herself in the police activity.
- i.** Host officers must never allow a participant to enter the home of any person unless the officer has first obtained the consent of the homeowner/occupant. In obtaining consent the officer must specifically notify the homeowner/occupant that the participant is a "ride-along participant" and there is "no legal obligation" to allow the participant inside the dwelling.

POLICE RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM REQUEST FORM AND WAIVER

I, the undersigned, hereby request permission to ride in a police vehicle of the Town of Wilmington, at such times and in such areas as may be approved by the Chief of Police or his designated representative. I understand that the police vehicle will be engaged in normal patrol (including times when I may be outside the vehicle) and law enforcement activities, some of which may be dangerous and expose passengers to risk or harm. I acknowledge this risk of harm and voluntarily accept it, hereby releasing the Town of Wilmington, the Wilmington Police Department, the individual officers and employees of the Town of Wilmington from any liability which might result from my participation in this program. I agree to the rules and instructions listed on the previous pages of this form.

Signature of Applicant: _____ Date: _____

NOTE: Applicants under sixteen (16) years of age must have this form read and signed by their parent or guardian prior to any participation in this program.

PERMISSION OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN:

I, the undersigned, being the parent or guardian of _____ hereby join with him/her in requesting permission for him/her to ride in a police vehicle as aforesaid and do join with him/her in granting a release of discharge to the Town of Wilmington, the Wilmington Police Department, the individual officers and employees of the Town of Wilmington, as set out in detail above.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

In case of emergency notify: _____ Phone: _____

PLEASE PRINT THE FOLLOWING REQUIRED INFORMATION:

Full Name of Applicant: _____

Phone Number: _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Driver's License / ID Card Number: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Dates Preferred: _____

School Attending / Occupation: _____

Application Approved: _____ Date: _____

Chief of Police