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| FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT  GENERAL ORDER | SUBJECT: RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM | | NUMBER: 412 |
| | EFFECTIVE DATE: November 7, 2022 | REVIEW: November, 2025 | |
| RESPONSIBLE ENTITY: PATROL BUREAU | | | <input type="checkbox"/> New Directive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Replaces: 430.3 <input type="checkbox"/> Revised: |
| ACCREDITATION STANDARDS | CALEA: | VLEPSC: | |

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to establish guidelines and procedures for community member participation in the Department's Ride-Along Program.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) to provide a ride-along program for interested community members to accompany sworn officers during their patrol duties in order to provide community insight into police operations and procedures. This policy does not apply to established Department ride-along procedures for Department employees, Auxiliary Police Officers, or Police Cadets.

III. ELIGIBILITY

A. FCPD ride-along applicants must meet at least one of the following criteria to be eligible to participate in the program:

1. Be a resident in the district station patrol area that receives the application.
2. Be a member of either a civic organization or employee of a business operating within Fairfax County.
3. Be employed by the Fairfax County Government in a position that would be enhanced by knowledge of Department procedures and/or functions.
4. Be either a police applicant with the FCPD or currently employed in law enforcement with another agency.
5. Be currently enrolled as a student in an accredited law enforcement program, traffic safety program, or law enforcement-related program of study.

6. Be a family member of a FCPD employee.
7. Demonstrate a special interest for participation that would benefit the FCPD, Fairfax County Government, or its community members.
8. Be sponsored by a current FCPD employee and approved by the employee's commander.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. The following procedures shall apply to all community member ride-along applicants prior to their participation in the program:

1. Applicants shall complete a Department [Ride-Along Application \(PD 165\)](#) prior to the ride-along. This form shall be retained for a period of three (3) years at the station or division where the ride-along takes place. Completed applications must be submitted to the Department no less than five (5) working days prior to the requested ride-along date.
2. A records check and current Department Records Management System (RMS) inquiry shall be made on all applicants. Results shall be printed and attached to the application form.
3. Applicants shall not have participated in a FCPD ride-along within the previous 365 days.
4. Applicants shall be at least 18 years of age.
5. Applications shall be reviewed by controlling station or division commanders, who may elect to interview applicants at their discretion. Command approval or denial shall be required for all ride-along applications. Where a commander is unavailable, a shift supervisor may approve or deny a ride-along application and notify the commander in a timely manner.

V. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

A. **Supervisors:** Controlling supervisors shall ensure all ride-along participants are advised of, and in compliance with, all instructions on the [Ride-Along Application \(PD165\)](#) prior to commencing the ride-along.

1. Shift supervisors shall determine which officer will conduct the ride-along.

2. Shift supervisors may terminate ride-along participation whenever continued participation constitutes undue risk, or the participant's conduct, demeanor, or actions are not in the best interests of the Department. Reasons for termination shall be documented in the current RMS.
 3. The time period of the participant's ride-along shall be established prior to approval of the ride-along application. These time limits may be adjusted at any time upon the request of the applicant. Extensions shall only be made with the approval of the shift supervisor or station/division commander.
- B. **Officers:** Officers who are assigned to ride-along participants shall be responsible for the conduct of the participant. Any observed acts of misconduct shall be reported to a supervisor immediately, who may terminate the participant's privilege to participate in the ride-along program at any time. Officers shall explain to the participant what action(s) they should take in the event of an emergency. At the discretion of the officer, participants may be ordered to exit the cruiser prior to responding to a determined emergency situation for their safety. Officers may not engage in motor vehicle pursuits when a ride-along participant is in their vehicle. Only officers who have completed Public Safety Cadet (PSC) training are permitted to have a PSC participate in the ride-along program with them.
1. **Documentation:** Officers shall document all community member ride-alongs and any extraordinary circumstances that may occur during the ride-along via the Field Contact module in the current Records Management System (RMS).
- C. **Public Safety Cadets:** Public Safety Cadets (PSC) assigned to Department sanctioned PSC units may participate in ride-alongs under the following conditions, 1) be approved by their FCPD unit mentor, 2) shall be at least 16 years of age or older, 3) Complete the [Ride-Along Application Form PD 165](#), and 4) PSCs aged 16 and 17 shall require their parent(s) signature on the PD 165.
- D. **Participants:** Ride-along participants shall wear seat belts at all times when the police vehicle is in motion. Participants may not ride-along with any officer with whom they have, or have had, any personal relationship (ex: spouse, former spouse, dating relationships). Participants shall not take part in any police action (ex: searches, arrests, interviews) unless specifically requested by an officer in accordance with the [Code of Virginia](#) with assistance in the performance of law enforcement duties. Ride-along participants shall not be permitted to remain in the company of prisoners during periods of officer absence. Participants who are exposed to privileged or confidential information shall not divulge said information to any other individual.

1. **Attire:** Ride-along participants shall wear business attire, and may wear, in a visible location, any identification approved and provided by the Department. Appropriate attire for men may include a business suit, sport coat, slacks, and collared shirt. Women may wear similar items or a dress or pants suit. Jeans, shirts without collars, and/or t-shirts are not permitted. Whenever asked by a community member, ride-along applicants shall identify themselves as either a community observer or ride-along participant. Department personnel who participate in the ride-along program may wear their appropriate uniform and display their Department-issued employee identification card.
2. **Involvement in Police Activity:** Participants shall not exit a police vehicle during any ongoing police activity unless directed to do so by a police officer. Participants may not become involved in police functions or conversations with suspected offenders, witnesses, complainants, or other individuals connected to any in-progress police investigation.
3. **Termination of Program:** At the direction of an officer or supervisor, ride-along participants may be requested to temporarily interrupt or cease their involvement in the program during hazardous, exigent, or unusual circumstances. Participants shall immediately comply with the request and obey all police directions in these circumstances.
4. **Prohibited Items:** Ride-along participants are prohibited from carrying or using the following items:
 - a. **Weapons:** Any firearms or other weapons concealed or otherwise, unless the participant is an active law enforcement official from the Commonwealth of Virginia or Federal entity. The carrying of any weapon by a law enforcement participant shall be governed in accordance with applicable federal and/or state law, and these participants will be issued a brightly colored arm band from the station in which they are assigned to ride out of that clearly reads “**POLICE.**”
 - b. Flashlights, cameras, radios, audio records, binoculars, or similar items.
 - c. Any tobacco or marijuana products, controlled narcotics and substances, alcohol, or any other intoxicants.

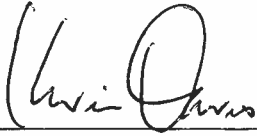
VI. LEGAL REFERENCES

- A. [Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-463](#); Refusal to aid officer in execution of his office.

General Order 412 becomes effective on the above date and rescinds all previous rules and regulations pertaining to the subjects.

ISSUED BY:

APPROVED BY:



Chief of Police



County Executive