

Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District

PEACE OFFICER POLICY

POLICY TITLE: Peace Officer Ride-Along Policy

OVERSIGHT: Peace Officer

POLICY NUMBER: 09.013.01

EFFECTIVE DATE: 01/04/2023

REVIEW DATE: 01/04/2023

Background

The Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District (District) operates and supports a Fire Investigation Unit (FIU) which is staffed with District Peace Officers. The District allows interested parties to participate in the Peace Officer Ride-Along Program with on-duty Fire Investigators. The program is an endeavor to acquaint potential applicants with fire investigator duties and peace officer services provided by the District.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide an opportunity for interested members of the community to gain first-hand experience of the duties and responsibilities of District Peace Officers. This policy also provides the requirements and approval process for the Peace Officer Ride-Along Program.

Scope

This policy applies to participants in the Peace Officer Ride-Along Program and all District personnel who may interact with a ride-along from this program during the regular course of their duties.

Definition

1. **District Peace Officer:** as defined in California Penal Code § 830.37 - Members of an arson investigation unit; fire department, or volunteer fire warden.

Policy

1. The Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District Peace Officer Ride-Along Program is offered to interested members of the public.
2. Every attempt will be made to accommodate interested persons requesting a Peace Officer Ride-Along; however any applicant may be disqualified from participation at the discretion of the District. The Supervising Investigator will contact the applicant and provide notification of the denial. Factors that may disqualify an applicant include, but are not limited to:
 - a. All participants in the Peace Officer Ride-Along Program must be at least 18 years of age
 - b. Prior criminal history
 - c. Pending criminal action

- d. Pending lawsuit against the District
 - e. Denial by any supervisor
3. All Peace Officer Ride-Along Program participants are subject to a criminal history check prior to approval of the ride-along. The criminal history check includes a local records check and a Department of Justice Automated Criminal History System check through CLETS. All applicants for this program must sign a consent form authorizing the District to conduct the criminal history check.
 4. Participants must present a valid photo identification when reporting for the scheduled ride-along.
 5. Participants in the Peace Officer Ride-Along Program, regardless of peace officer status, shall not be considered on duty and shall not represent themselves as a peace officer or participate in any law enforcement activity.
 6. Program participants shall be considered observers only, and shall be under the direct supervision of the assigned Fire Investigator during the ride-along.
 7. An “observer” nametag shall be worn at all times by the participant.
 8. Under no circumstance shall a ride along be permitted to enter a private residence with a District Peace Officer without the expressed consent of the resident or other authorized person.
 9. No tape recordings, cameras or similar devices are allowed during the ride-along without prior authorization of the Fire Chief or designee.
 10. Program participants are not permitted to carry weapons of any kind during the ride along, regardless of peace officer status or valid Carry Concealed Weapon (CCW) permit.
 11. Program participants will not become involved in any investigation, handling of evidence, or discussions with victims or suspects.
 12. No more than one ride-along per applicant is permitted every six months. Exceptions must be approved by the Fire Marshal.
 13. No more than one program participant is allowed to ride-along during any given time period, and no more than one participant may ride-along in a District Peace Officer’s vehicle.
 14. Participants shall wear neat, clean, and appropriate clothing that projects a professional image. Shorts, sweats, tank tops, halter tops, jeans, or clothing faded, torn, soiled or that displays offensive language or symbols are not allowed. Open-toe shoes, high heels and sandals are not allowed. The Supervising Investigator or on-duty Fire Investigator may refuse a ride along to anyone not properly dressed.

15. Participants shall follow the District personnel's instructions at all times.
16. Participants shall conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner at all times.
17. The ride-along may be terminated at any time due to emergency conditions or at the discretion of District personnel.
18. Participants must wear seatbelts at all times when in a District vehicle.
19. Participants are not authorized to operate any District apparatus or vehicles.
20. For security and safety reasons, participants are not permitted to handle or use District or personnel's equipment.
21. Program participants are not permitted in any booking area or facility.
22. In the event of a potentially dangerous or hazardous incident, the ride-along may be dropped off at a safe location or directed to remain in the District vehicle. The ride-along is expected to remain in the District vehicle until directed to a safe location by District personnel. Examples of such incidents include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Fires of any type
 - b. Any immediately dangerous to life or health (IDLH) environment
 - c. Hazardous materials incidents
 - d. Incidents requiring extrication or technical rescue of any type
 - e. Violent crime
 - f. Any situation that would jeopardize the safety of the ride-along
 - g. Any scene that the incident commander deems inappropriate for the ride-along to observe.
23. Failure to comply with any of the above listed criteria will result in the immediate termination of the ride-along.

Procedures

1. Applicant submits the Peace Officer Ride-Along Program Request Form authorizing the District to run a criminal background check.
2. Peace Officer Ride-Along Program requests are pre-scheduled by the Supervising Investigator based on availability and entered on the ride-along calendar after confirming applicant's eligibility.
3. The assigned Fire Investigator will verify the participant's identification upon arrival at the station.

4. The assigned Fire Investigator will include notification of the ride-along in the morning briefing for the Battalion Chiefs and Shift Commander.
5. Obtain the signed Ride-Along Waiver & Release of Liability and the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District Guest/Trainee Confidentiality & Non-Disclosure Agreement from the participant and forward them to the Supervising Fire Investigator in the District inter-office mail.
6. Provide the ride-along a safety briefing including the conditions that limit participation at the scene of an incident and orient the participant to the assigned seat in the vehicle.
7. Consider the safety of the ride-along at all times. Sound judgment should be used when encountering a potentially dangerous situation, and when feasible, let the participant out of the vehicle in a well-lighted place of safety. The Shift Commander will be advised of the situation, and as soon as practical, another District member will respond to pick up the participant at that location. The ride-along may be continued or terminated at this time.

References

1. Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District Ride-Along Program Policy
2. Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District Ride-Along Waiver & Release of Liability Form
3. Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District Guest/Trainee Confidentiality & Nondisclosure Agreement
4. Citrus Heights Police Department Ride Along Policy
5. Sacramento County Sheriff's Office Ride-Along Program Operations Order 2/19